
Discussion paper

Associations in emergent communities at the Amazon forest frontier, Mato Grosso

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Small and medium forestry enterprises for poverty reduction and sustainability

Most international attention in forestry has been given to improving the conditions for large-scale or micro-scale forestry, and much less to the 'messy middle' - which produces a high proportion of forest products and involves huge numbers of people. Ways need to be found by which small and medium-scale forestry enterprises (SMFEs) can better contribute to reducing poverty and improving the prospects for sustainability.

IIED, with partners in Uganda, South Africa, India, Brazil, Guyana and China has been investigating these issues. Country diagnostics show that the SMFE sector is of major significance for livelihoods in these countries – the net effect of myriad small players represents a substantial part of local economies. Yet, these are largely invisible economies, and policy and programme developments almost completely ignore the SMFE sector. Raising the sector's visibility such that its impacts can be better assessed, and then going on to explore how the positive links to sustainability, livelihoods and poverty-reduction can be enhanced, is a major challenge to which this initiative seeks to rise. Reports in the Small and medium forestry enterprises series available from IIED on request, and downloadable from www.iied.org, include:

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Executive summary

This report is an independent component of a broader research programme on associations, carried out in the Brazilian Amazon. The aim is to understand how associations can help marginalised immigrants in forested frontier areas to be better involved in local and/or national level policy processes. Supplementing findings from previous surveys in the states of Acre and Pará, this study seeks to contribute qualitative discussions on associations, based on fieldwork in Mato Grosso's northern frontiers.

Migrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds and life trajectories are compelled to organise themselves into formal associations – as a form of social representation but also to receive the financial benefits outlined in public policies. Certain groups have managed to transform their associations into forms useful to them. How people have reacted to imposed forms of social organisation, and how they are translating associations to fit their own priorities, are the foci of this report.

This report describes and analyses eight associations, two cooperatives, one group and one micro-enterprise that are all active in Mato Grosso frontier areas affected by the route of BR-163 highway. It also assesses the necessary elements for an association to function and describes what has been achieved in attempts to engage members in political processes affecting their lands and forest resources.

In the southern fringes of the broad Brazilian arch of deforestation, study sites in Mato Grosso have become scenes of social and political confrontation. Migrants have carried out an intense process of adaptation. Diverse production systems have merged. Varied forms of family farm agriculture have been adapted to the frontier ecosystems encountered by migrants. In addition, globalisation has brought an extremely forceful expansion of soybean plantations, aimed at international markets. This has either displaced family farms or incorporated them into out-growing schemes. These commodity plantations have pushed cattle ranching further into the forests. Related to these processes, logging has also played a role in the expansion of Mato Grosso's frontiers.

The role of associations in these contested contexts is under construction, as is the role of supporting institutions, such as the Church and NGOs. Associations may find it difficult to survive by themselves, and are likely to have better chances as articulated knots in a wider web of socially mobilised institutions. This connectivity and mutual aid is necessary not only to face powerful antagonistic actors, but also to better institutionalise a code of ethics and good practice within each, and among all local organisations. Associations struggling to protect their members' ways of life will have to negotiate such ethics and values with other sectors of society. Commercialisation is an area that still requires further research. Whether selling organic compost made of sawmill residues, or producing stingless bee honey, a critical priority is the need for fair terms of trade.

Acronyms and abbreviations

COLIDER	Integration and Regional Development Colonisation Enterprise
COOPERAGREPA	Cooperative of Ecological Producers in the Amazon Gate Region
DFID	Department for International Development
DIEESE	Inter-Union Department of Socio-Economic Studies
EMBRAPA	Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation
FNO	Constitutional Fund for Financing the North
GAPA	Agro-forestry and Environmental Protection Group
GTA	Amazon Working Group
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IBAMA	Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources
IBGE	Brazilian Census Bureau
IDB	Interamerican Development Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INCRA	National Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform
INDECO	Integration, Development and Colonisation Enterprise
INESC	Institute of Socio-Economic Studies
INPE	National Institute of Space Research
IPAM	Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia
MMA	Ministry of the Environment
MSE	Micro- and small enterprise
PADEQ	Programme of Alternatives to Deforestation and Forest Fires
PADIC	Programme of Support for the Development of Industry and Commerce
PP	Progressive Party
PPG7	Pilot Programme to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest
PRONAF	National Programme to Strengthen Family Farming
PRONERA	National Programme for Education in Agrarian Reform Areas
PSDB	Brazilian Social Democracy Party
PT	Workers' Party
PTB	Brazilian Labour Party
SEBRAE	Brazilian Secretary of Entrepreneurship
SINOP	Northern Paraná Real Estate Society
SMFE	Small and medium forest enterprise
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

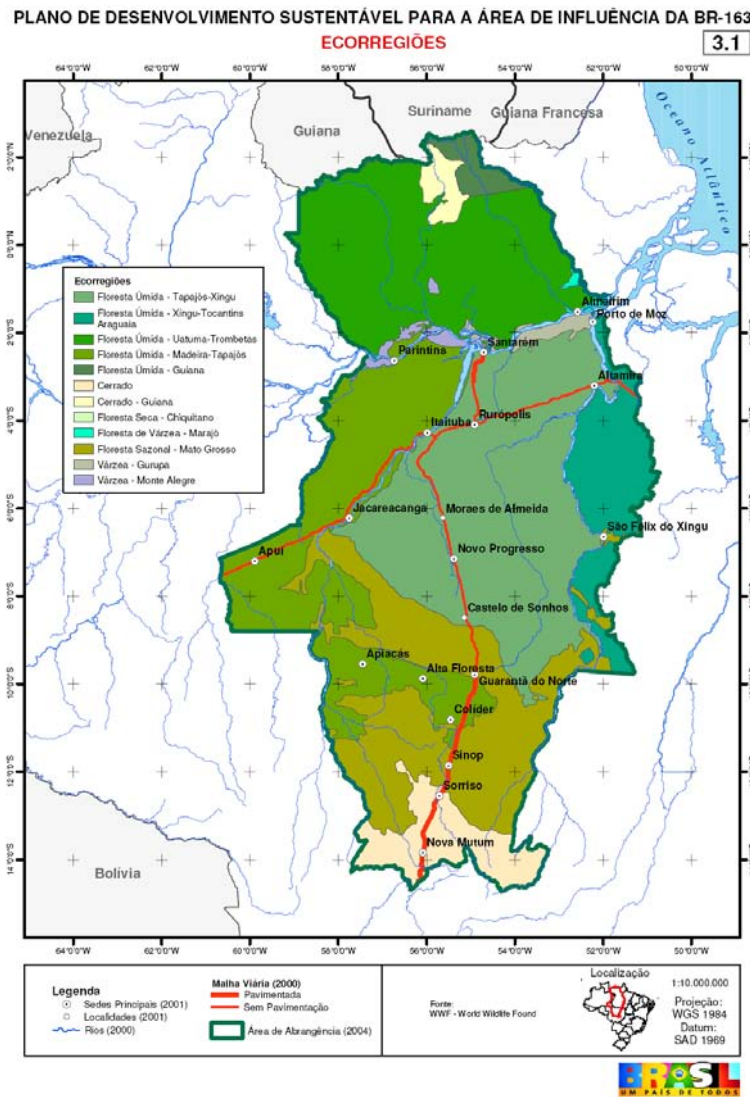
1. Introduction

1.1 Contested forest frontiers

The research sites examined in this report are located in the municipalities of Diamantino, Nova Ubiratã, Vera, Tabaporã, Cláudia, Terra Nova do Norte and Alta Floresta, in northern Mato Grosso. Our research sites are located along the BR-163 highway, shown in the map below (Figure 1) of southern Pará and northern Mato Grosso. From the northern municipality of Alta Floresta down to the southern municipality of Diamantino, these sites are located in humid and seasonal forests and savannahs, in ecosystems that are subject to continued deforestation that has intensified in the last three years (see Figure 2).

The Brazilian government has created several settlement projects in our area of research (Figure 3) to provide land for farmers migrating to these new frontiers. According to the current Forest Code, these settlers are allowed to deforest 20 per cent of their land for agriculture and other activities, and maintain 80 per cent as legal reserve. Forests under legal reserve can only be used only if a sustainable forest management plan has been drawn up and approved by the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA). To access public benefits through official settlement projects and to conform with existing regulations, settlers throughout Brazil are impelled to organise themselves into formal associations. Although the authors of this report recognise the many forms of both formal and informal associations in the Amazon, we have chosen to limit the focus of this study to formal associations.

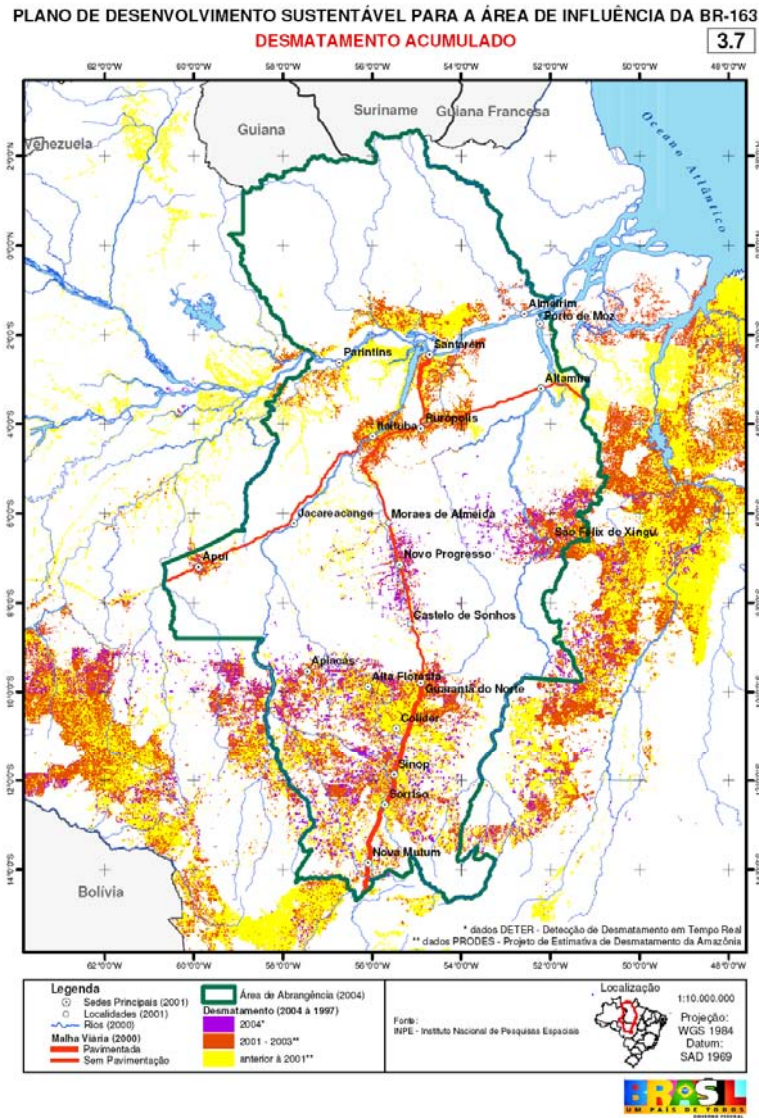
Figure 1. The route of the BR-163 highway through the States of Pará and Mato Grosso



Source: Ministry of the Environment (MMA); World Wildlife Fund (WWF) 2004.

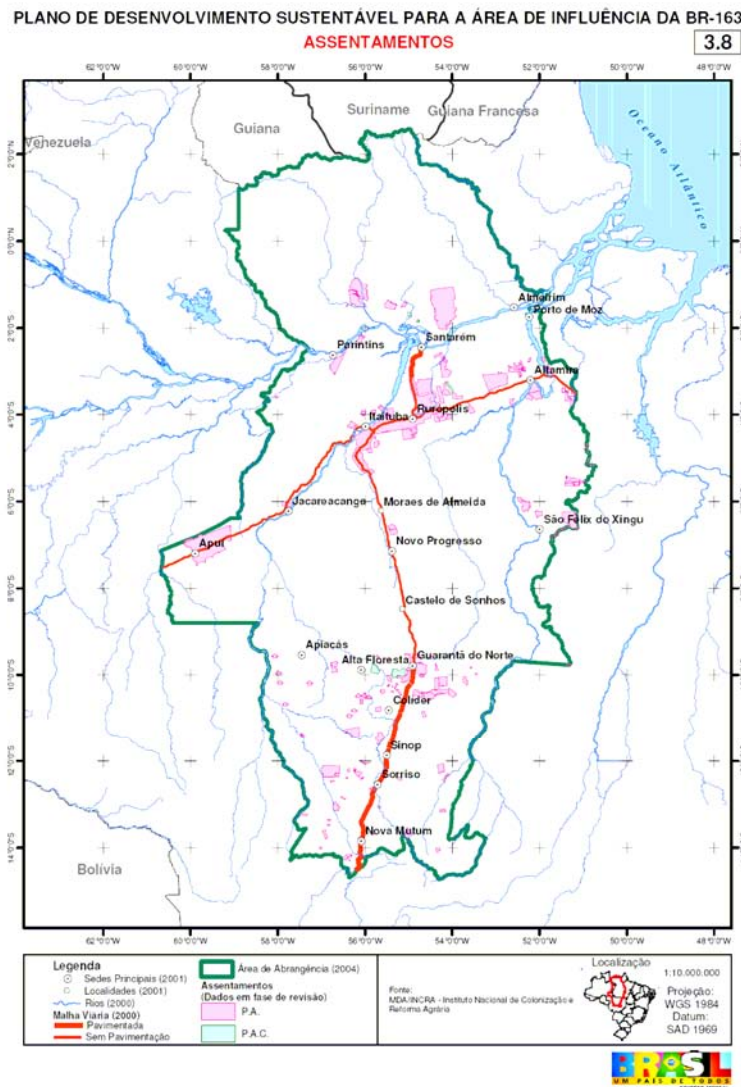
The shaded squares in the ecoregion [Ecorregiões] box in Figure 1 above indicate the following types of vegetation, in top down order: Humid forest – Tapajós-Xingu, Humid forest – Xingú-Tocantins Araguaia, Humid forest – Uatuma-Trombetas, Humid forest – Madeira-Tapajós, Humid forest – Guiana, Savannah, Savannah – Guiana, Dry forest – Chiquitano, Wetland forest – Marajó, Seasonal forest – Mato Grosso, Wetland – Gurupá, Wetland – Monte Alegre.

Figure 2. Accumulated deforestation



Source: MMA; WWF 2004.

Figure 3. Settlements along the BR-163 highway



Source: MMA; WWF 2004.

The P.A. shaded areas in Figure 3 above indicate settlement projects and the P.A.C. shaded areas indicate pilot settlement projects under the 'Programme for Improvement and Consolidation of Settlements as a Result of Agrarian Reform'.

1.2 Migration and associations in the Amazon and Mato Grosso

The first wave of migration to the southern parts of the historic state of Mato Grosso (which comprised the present day states of Mato Grosso do Sul and Mato Grosso) started in the seventeenth century. In the early eighteenth century, migration intensified with the introduction of gold mining activities in the central region of Brazil. In the nineteenth century, with the decline of mining activities, the local economy collapsed and the region was once again isolated from the rest of the country (Mendonça, 1982; Betran, 1988; Siqueira, 1990).

In the 1940s and 1950s, development policies for national integration were set by the central government. These aimed to promote occupation of the central region of Brazil, which was still isolated from the rest of the economy. Regional infrastructure was improved to encourage migration of non-indigenous people and to integrate the central region with both the northern and southern parts of the country. National policies and progressive improvement of local infrastructure gradually attracted rubber tappers, cattle ranchers and loggers to the region (Sanches and Gasparini, 2000).

In the mid-1960s, after the military coup, the national government began implementing development projects in the Amazon region, introducing an economic development model based on infrastructure projects. This included the construction of huge highways across the forest. It also granted incentives, credit, and tax breaks to big foreign and national enterprises interested in settling in the region. The national strategy to integrate isolated regions resulted in a huge influx of large investors and land speculators to the state of Mato Grosso. This in turn stimulated the development of extensive agriculture and cattle ranching projects and triggered a regional process of deforestation. Official data released by the National Institute of Space Research (INPE - Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais) demonstrates the six-fold increase of deforestation in Mato Grosso between 1975 and 1983 (Martine, 1978; Hogan, 2001; World Bank, 2003).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the state introduced a further development strategy for regional integration. This led to the establishment of colonisation programmes and a land reform process implemented by the National Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA - Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária) in collaboration with private enterprises. The policies were originally intended to re-settle landless peasants from other regions of Brazil (the northeast in particular), but ended up fostering regional occupation by promoting public and private colonisation projects and giving incentives to large-scale agriculture and cattle ranching. In 1977, the state of Mato Grosso was divided in two, due to alleged difficulties in promoting integrated regional development across such a wide geographical area with such high cultural diversity. The southern region became the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, while the north remained known as Mato Grosso (Sanches and Gasparini, 2000).

The settlements in our study sites have resulted from these state development policies and colonisation programmes. The main economic incentives attracting

new settlers to the region have included rubber tapping and diamond extraction (in the 1950s and 1960s); extensive agriculture and cattle ranching (since the mid-1960s); gold mining (since the 1980s) and commercial logging activities (from the 1980s). The main road within the study area, the BR-163, was first cut in 1974, and has not yet been paved. The settlements in the study sites began during the mid-1990s.

Until 1980, incentives and credit were mostly channelled to large properties. This lack of incentives, coupled with poor infrastructure, forced most smallholders to leave the region. Many smallholders sold their land to large-scale landowners and moved to urban areas. Facing economic hardship, those who remained established associations in an attempt to overcome their common difficulties (Sanchez and Gasparini, 2000).

As in other areas of Brazil, associations in Mato Grosso are the legally recognised form of social representation and organisation¹. Associations in Mato Grosso have adopted this one-size-fits-all instrument of representation and organisation, imposed by the government. Migrants struggling to access rights to public investments have little alternative:

Today, public investments targeting individuals no longer exist. Everything must be through associations. If one does not participate in it, one does not exist. One cannot even access social security, let alone support for maternal leave, and other social benefits.
(Anonymous former government agent)

This pattern is observed throughout Latin America at different points in time. In part, associations have been legally required, to homogenise and thereby pacify the social organisations of migrant settlers (Avritzer, 1997). From colonial times to the 1950s, religions, race-based organisations, and associations failed to adapt to the existing plurality and tensions within Latin American societies.

During the 1950s, in the oldest logging frontiers in the states of Pará and Maranhão, the religious and labour union movements acted to drive out the diversity present in social groups of distinct ethnic, historical and often antagonistic, backgrounds. In spite of this, many informal associations were created in parallel to the formal associations recognised by the authorities. Aiming at self-help, such as cooperation for funerals, support to widows and sick villagers etc., these informal associations emerged spontaneously and were active for decades. Examples of these culturally based associations can still be observed today (personal field observations).

However, these informal associations are gradually vanishing as new contexts demand different forms of association. Today, migrant struggles go beyond sickness and natural death, to more antagonistic and fraught situations (such as

¹ This is in accordance with the norms and statutes defined in the Brazilian Civil Code. For further information about legislation and judicial comments on this and other forms of social organisation in Brazil, see <http://www.sebraesp.com.br/topo/fique%20de%20olho/informa%C3%A7%C3%B5es/cooperativismo/>

cattle ranchers taking over land and forest resources) and require new forms of organisation. Through political negotiation, new associations have emerged from and endured conflicts with stakeholders of diverse powers (Almeida, 1990). Under the military regime of the mid-1960s, social movements were forced to abandon their formal organisations and submit to government rules. In urban areas, blue-collar labour associations were dismantled and members were forced to forfeit their rights to strike and free speech. In rural areas, diverse forms of associations were massacred during violent struggles for land. Thereafter, associations became institutions, providing social assistance on behalf of the government. A striking example is the case of the Araguaia river region where associations were used as pacifying instruments to assuage the terror provoked by government attacks on local guerrilla groups.

Throughout these processes, the government agencies responsible for dealing with settlers and colonists changed development trajectories. During the 1960s and 1970s, Transamazon associations were merely a list of names, grouped by the government to organise the colonisation schemes. Settlers were spread across rectangular plots of land as allocated by INCRA.

It was only at the very end of the 1970s that social actors emerging from political struggles began to demand new associative forms, seeking to represent civil society aspirations of limiting and controlling the power of the state. The re-democratisation at the start of 1980s allowed the emergence of what has been described as 'new associativism' (Avritzer, 1997). This phenomenon of mass democracy has been credited not only with local successes but also with redressing major national problems such as volatile inflation (Armijo, 2005).

In the Amazon, distinct forms of association emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, expressing both the political and ethnic identities of their protagonists to broader society. Spontaneous associations, whose glue was the struggle for unique ways of life, came into existence in public arenas (Allegretti, 1990; Almeida, 1995). By the end of the 1980s, these groups had gained legal status as formal associations, and thus became potential beneficiaries of public policies. Rubber tappers, babaçu and Brazil nut gatherers, handcrafters, fishermen, quilombolas (descendants of slaves) and others all followed this pattern. With the emergence of these new identities and associations, INCRA was forced to respond to more explicit demands. New and specific forms of land regulation were created on behalf of these associations. Today, INCRA also has a specific programme to deal with gender and ethnic issues.

In addition to the above, associations for indigenous groups also came into public existence, bringing with them their own unique demands. However, the social relations and forms of organisation of these indigenous and so-called 'traditional' communities, whose identities are inherently interconnected to their territories, are quite different to those of the migrants, who have been uprooted from their original lands and driven to the new forest frontiers of the Amazon. Masked by common terms such as 'the poor' and 'migrants', are numerous and distinct life trajectories expressing diverse processes of disruption and displacement from ancestral lands.

For these migrants, formal associations do not represent bottom-up, grassroots, freely chosen options. Associations are formally viewed as the authorised mediators between the government and local people seeking access to public benefits. Standardised statutes, decision-making processes and voting systems that conform with pre-defined power hierarchies, constrain the proper organisation of migrants struggling to form healthy communities in frontier areas.

But if this negative outlook is a reality, why do associations proliferate so wildly in frontier scenarios? And why, in all seven case study municipalities, has this form of social organisation been adopted by migrants to overcome poverty and political marginalisation? In a context where stakeholders of diverse powers compete for agricultural and forest resources, how are associations trying to play major roles in guaranteeing and enhancing livelihoods?

This report will seek to answer these questions, aiming to explore how people have dealt with this imposed form of social organisation, and are working to transform associations under their own terms. The report describes and analyses 12 associations, cooperatives and micro-enterprises spread across seven municipalities, drawing on information collected from a wide group of informants. The report's objective is to understand the social relations within these associations and to analyse their impact on members' lives.

Before assessing these associations, however, we give a brief description of their current context. Contextual factors have serious impacts on the role of associations in representing migrants as settlers, micro-entrepreneurs and forest users.

1.3 Contradicting policies

1.3.1 As representatives of migrant settlers, where do associations stand in the public policy agenda?

In 2004, the second year of the Lula government, observers confirmed the decision to withdraw the resources of the national budget destined to rescue the social debts. Instead, these resources were spent in payment of public debts²... 2004's primary superávit exceeded the expectations. The expected rate for 2004 was 4.25 per cent, but it reached 5.1 per cent. This means that the country 'saved' R\$61.13 billion: resources that should have been applied in fundamental programs designed to

² Social debts are debts which the nation owes to people who have not received all due benefits as citizens. For example, the Brazilian government is repaying the nation's social debts to the impoverished black rural population by implementing agrarian reform programmes specifically targeted at these groups. Public debts are those which the nation owes to either public or private investors. For example, to pave a highway, the government contracts services from private investors. Later, the public pays taxes to the government, who thus recover this debt, and are able to repay the investors and maintain their credit.

decrease social inequalities, rescuing social debts. (Institute of Socio-Economic Studies – INESC, 2005)

Public debts are mostly owned by rich individuals, groups and enterprises. The high priority accorded to the payment of public debts, rather than investment in social debts, results in further wealth concentration and social exclusion. Due to contradicting promises made during the presidential campaign, this priority has had a particular impact on those who are already marginalised, such as the migrants focused on here. Although expenditure is formally planned and sanctioned by annual budgetary law, political negotiations can lead to modifications. In 2004, only 60 per cent of the planned budget for social programmes was effectively executed. More than 70 per cent of the public budget was spent on the payment of public debts, in order that the government could retain the trust of lenders (INESC, 2005).

The current federal government was elected through a coalition of parties led by the left wing Workers' Party – the PT. In 1979, the PT emerged from the struggles experienced by blue-collar workers' unions in São Paulo. The ideal of having a party representing workers spread rapidly, including to rural workers' unions in seemingly isolated Amazon frontiers. The PT supported many unions struggling for agrarian reform. As associations were the only accepted form of representation, many of them were closely linked to the PT (at least at a leadership level). But many other associations were formed under the strong influence of right wing political figures. Local stakeholders in the frontier distinguish between these associations identifying them as either 'associations of the patron' (when influenced by right wing actors) or 'associations of the struggle' (when linked to social movements).

The current neglect of social investment by the Lula government is causing considerable problems for both government sectors and social movements. This context informs all associations. The stated first and second goals of each association in the case study settlements are to assure firstly, land tenure, and secondly, credit. These are the two main issues negotiated by associations through their involvement in policy processes. Having endured the hardships of living in forest frontiers, associations prioritise these two goals – critical to the secure settlement of their members. As an example of resources used to pay social debts, the 2004 budget designated R\$1.8 billion to agrarian reform end-programmes to support access to land and settlements. This amount was already very low in relation to the anticipated 115,000 beneficiary families for the same period. In fact, the actual expenditure of R\$1.6 billion was barely enough to settle 36,000 families and demonstrates the lack of effective concern for social debts.

Due to compromises involving large rural entrepreneur stakeholders and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Ministry of Agrarian Development's 2005 budget was cut heavily from R\$3.7 billion to R\$1.7 billion (INESC, 2005). As a result, two major end-programmes on credit and sustainable settlements for rural workers have been negatively affected, despite these being the highest priority for many associations.

1.3.2 As representatives of migrant micro-entrepreneurs where do associations stand in the public policy agenda?

In newly opened frontiers, family-based initiatives (many with less than 10 employees) lead a wide spectrum of economic activities. In industry, agriculture, commerce and services (or a combination of these), family-based initiatives respond to demands that cannot be met by larger more formal enterprises that find the lack of infrastructure and consolidated markets too limiting.

In public speeches and popular publications, the government recognises the significant role of migrants that extends beyond subsistence farming to the management of micro- and small enterprises (MSEs) (Brazilian Secretary of Entrepreneurship – SEBRAE, seminar in Pará, 2004). Throughout Brazil, there are approximately five million MSEs dealing with industry, commerce and services (Silva, 2005). In 2000, MSEs were responsible for 20 per cent of national GDP, contributed 28 per cent to the total value of corporate product in the national economy and accounted for 96 per cent of all enterprises (May *et al.*, 2003). According to the Inter-Union Department of Socio-Economic Studies (DIEESE) (2005), MSEs employ 45 per cent of the formal labour force. To these formally recognised enterprises, we should also add Brazil's estimated 14.5 million informal MSEs.

Despite their irrefutable magnitude in economic and social terms, MSEs have not been targets of favourable public policies. Laws and incentives are not adequately formulated for them. As a consequence, 50 per cent of Brazilian MSEs do not survive their third year of existence (Silva, 2005). According to SEBRAE (2005), problems relating to the following issues are the main constraints for MSEs in Mato Grosso:

1. Legal status
2. Clear budgets for investment
3. Collateral
4. Size and documentation of guarantees
5. Proper registration of members, associates, and enterprise
6. Clear bookkeeping
7. Acceptable market studies
8. Compatibility of credit proposals with productive goals
9. Managerial control

All associations examined in this study were found to face these problems.

If we also include small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) (considered here as enterprises with less than 99 employees), MSEs represent more than 98 per cent of businesses and are responsible for 75 per cent of timber production in Brazil. In the Amazon frontier, forest-harvesting enterprises are increasing in number, and second only to the state of Pará, Mato Grosso is a significant focus of forest-based industries (May *et al.*, 2003). In Mato Grosso, SMFEs are one small piece in a complex puzzle of rapid and extensive deforestation, which has become the focus of national and international attention. Associations play an

important role as an interface between government and micro-enterprise. They serve as mediators to negotiate the economic aspirations and strategies of the settlers, within contexts ruled by laws and incentives that have not been adapted for them as micro-entrepreneurs.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research sites and key informants

Mato Grosso was chosen as a research site due to its importance in timber production, but also because of differences in the composition of forest migrants at the frontier. All of the case study associations, cooperatives and micro-enterprises are located in northern Mato Grosso, in either settlement areas under agrarian reform or their neighbouring towns. In both situations, these organisations are located in areas affected by the route of the BR-163 highway.

IPAM's Scenario Program research team (which has been engaged in research and collective actions along the route affected by the BR-163) introduced us to the first key informants – association leaders and members. These interviews allowed us³ to understand the contextual issues of the sites. Table 1 shows the formal associations, cooperatives and micro-enterprises, whose members and/or leaders were interviewed.

We also interviewed informants in rural unions, NGOs and logging organisations to further our understanding of the above associations, cooperatives and micro-enterprises. A major process involving these sites and organisations is an ongoing 'Mobilisation of Social Movements along the BR-163', which among other issues is addressing the proposed paving of the BR-163 dirt road. This mobilisation comprises more than 70 grassroots organisations and NGOs, who are seeking to initiate dialogue with stakeholders in sectors including cattle ranching, timber, agro-business and government. The group has already organised several collective events.

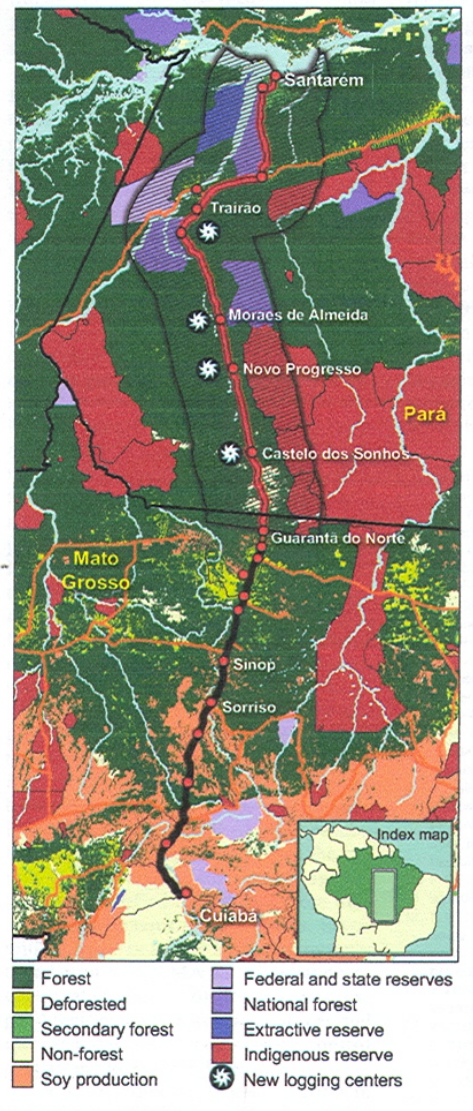
All of the research sites examined have been impacted by cattle ranching, logging and, more recently, expansion of soybean plantations pushing the first two of these activities further inside the forests. As we will see in the following sections of this report, soybean plantations are key to understanding the dynamics affecting associations in this frontier.

³ Luciene Dias Figueiredo - educator, MSc in family agriculture; and Ligia Sauaya Pereira - biologist, MSc in forestry and land use management

Table 1. Associations and cooperatives in surveyed municipalities

Municipality	Associations and cooperatives
Diamantino	April 17 Association of Small Rural Producers in the Caetés Settlement (Associação dos Pequenos Produtores Rurais 17 de Abril, no PA Caetés)
Diamantino	Association of Rural Worker Women in the Caetés Settlement (Associação de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais da Gleba Caetés)
Nova Ubiratã	Association of Rural Workers in the Boa Esperança/Entre Rios Settlement (Associação de Trabalhadores Rurais da Gleba Boa Esperança/Entre Rios)
Vera	Association of Rural Workers in the Califórnia Settlement (Associação de Trabalhadores Rurais do PA Califórnia)
Tabaporã	Association of Nova Esperança Family Farmers in the Mercedes I and II Settlement (Associação de Agricultores Familiares Nova Esperança, no PA Mercedes I e II)
Tabaporã	Association of Agro-Rio Family Farmers in the Mercedes I and II Settlement (Associação de Agricultores Familiares Agro Rio, no PA Mercedes I e II)
Tabaporã	Association of Agrovila Residents in the Mercedes I and II Settlement (Associação dos Moradores da Agrovila de Mercedes I e II)
Tabaporã	Electricity, Telephone and Rural Development Cooperative in the Mercedes I and II Settlement (COOPERME) (Cooperativa de Energia, Telefonia e Desenvolvimento Rural PA Mercedes I e II)
Cláudia	Association of Amazon Forest Handcrafters (Associação dos Artesãos da Floresta Amazônica)
Cláudia	Agroforestry and Environmental Protection Group (GAPA) (Grupo Agroflorestal e Proteção Ambiental)
Terra Nova do Norte	Cooperative of Ecological Producers in the Amazon Gate Region (COOPERAGREPA) (Cooperativa dos Agricultores Ecológicos do Território do Portal da Amazônia)
Alta Floresta	Esteio Family Farm – a micro-enterprise (Chácara Esteio – micro-empresa familiar)

Figure 4. Soy production along the route of the BR-163 highway



Source: Nepstad *et al.*, 2002.

According to researchers and association leaders, the paving of the BR-163 highway will prompt extreme changes in land markets and consequently, the socio-environmental conditions of the sites. The organisations listed in Table 2 are working within this context.

Table 2. Additional interviewees from the study region

Municipality	Workers' unions
Lucas do Rio Verde	Lucas do Rio Verde Rural Workers' Union (Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais de Lucas do Rio Verde)
Sinop	Sinop Rural Workers' Union (Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais de Sinop)
Sinop	Northern Mato Grosso Construction and Furniture Workers' Union (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores na Indústria da Construção e do Mobiliário da Região Norte do Estado de Mato Grosso)
	Logging organisations
Alta Floresta	Alta Floresta Loggers' Union (Sindicato dos Madeireiros do município de Alta Floresta)
Alta Floresta	Sandramar Logging Industry and Commerce Ltd (Empresa Sandramar Indústria e Comércio de Madeiras Ltda)
Alta Floresta	Talisia Logging Company (Empresa Madeireira Talísia)
	NGOs
Alta Floresta	Life Centre Institute (ICV) (Instituto Centro Vida)
Alta Floresta	Ants Society (Sociedade Formigas)
Alta Floresta	Forest Institute (Instituto Floresta)
Lucas do Rio Verde	Father João Peter Institute (Instituto Padre João Peter)

2.2 Research design and approach

In a previous study by IPAM, quantitative data on associations and cooperatives, located in frontier areas in the states of Acre and Pará, was gathered through structured surveys (see Annex 3 and Campos *et al.*, 2005). This data helped us to visualise the profile of associations impacted by highways. For this study, we collected qualitative data on people's perceptions of these profiles and on issues elicited in Acre and Pará. We compared and contrasted lessons from fieldwork in Acre and Pará (see 2.3) against those from Mato Grosso. Conducting a survey from southern to northern Mato Grosso, we interviewed leaders and members of associations who had been identified (by experienced researchers) as most active in representing their peers in political processes. In line with a decrease in population density from south to north, we observed a correlating trend of decreased established agricultural activities. (In the north, there is higher rainfall and greater prevalence of tropical humid forests.) Informal interviews and field observations allowed us to capture perceptions of diverse social situations linked to associations, which were either recorded and transcribed or registered in field journals.

By 'social situations' we refer to '*events (that the researcher) observes, and from them and their inter-relationships in a particular society he abstracts the social structure, relationships, institutions, etc. of that society. By them and by new situations, he must check the validity of his generalisations.*' (Gluckman, 1958: 2)

This concept of social situation recognises both the researcher's restricted position of observation, in place and time, but also the validity of a well-trained fieldworker, to make contextual readings. In this project, we used this concept to integrate our quantitative and qualitative data. We also applied participant observation and engagement in collective actions as a means to understand statements by informants⁴.

For specific, selected issues, where we thought the research would benefit from objective information, we applied a structured questionnaire (Annex 3) following basic statistical procedures. Descriptive statistics of material conditions (value of association fees, number of members etc.); objective conditions (number of years residence, level of schooling etc.); and environmental conditions, helped us to identify patterns and contexts from which certain discourses and practices became apparent.

The transcribed discourses that we discuss in this work are not intended as historical truths, but are accounts of what we heard presented in ways that make sense to us and hopefully to the reader.

According to Marcus and Fischer (1986), fieldwork accounts are determined by the context, rhetoric, institutional setting, generalisations, political standing, and history that they are steeped in. Thus, we need to recognise the partial nature of our accounts. The validity of the narratives we are presenting does not come from an assumed immediacy of being there, but by how we specify who speaks or writes, when, where, with whom and under what institutional or historical constraints (Foucault, 1972).

The narratives are not direct representations or syntheses, but allegorical instruments to tell a story about ways of life. From these histories, the reader and the author may extract conceptual and practical findings to better understand associations.

2.3 Research questions

For our study in Mato Grosso, we further pursued the four hypotheses already tested in Acre and Pará:

1. Cohesion: Association functionality is dependent on particularly strong mutual aspirations.
2. Resilience: Association functionality is dependent on the credibility and legitimacy of different types of decision-making processes and association governance.

⁴ IPAM has actively participated in collective actions along the BR-163 for the past five years.

3. Equity: Association functionality is dependent on the extent and adequacy of representation of different interest groups, including gender representation.

4. Support: Association functionality is dependent on the degree to which policies and institutions are supportive.

Related to these hypotheses, and based on lessons from our previous study, we focused on the following elements:

- Association history and formation – its longevity and the drivers of collective action.
- Decision-making processes and governance – the transparency of decision making, accountability mechanisms and re-election.
- Credibility of representation – including selection procedures, measures to address gender balance, criteria for membership and extent of active enrolment.
- Presence of active support structures or constraints – either policies or institutions, their origin and function, and level of interaction with associations.

Our interviews were much like informal conversations, beginning with grand-tour type questions about life in general, to spontaneously capture the important topics identified by the interviewee. Following on from this, and in an attempt to explore the topics elicited and the elements listed above, we also asked more detailed, mini-tour type questions⁵. Rather than sticking rigidly to questions solely about associations, we also tried to establish answers to the following:

- What are the forms of representation, organisation and mobilisation being adopted by the interviewee to access citizens' rights?
- What are the forms of representation, organisation and mobilisation s/he has information about?
- How do members participate in these organisations?
- How are these organisations dealing with forest environments?
- What kind of partnerships are they engaged in to reach their goals?
- As forest users, what are the relationships between their organisations and those of loggers and other social groups?
- Which public policies are affecting them and how?

These questions were aimed at improving our understanding of the wider linkages that help marginalised migrants participate in political processes.

3. Selected fieldwork narratives

Most of the case study associations (see Annex 1) were located in areas under the Agrarian Reform Programme, which was mostly implemented in the region

⁵ This method of questioning is introduced in Spradley, 1979.

from the mid-1990s. As in other regions in Brazil, once a decree to expropriate land for agrarian reform is announced, a sequence of actions occurs. The creation of the so-called 'PA' – or settlement project – is the central step. Struggles to access land and forest resources are a central part of social situations in the frontier. Unlike the Transamazon and rubber tapping areas of Acre, where social movements are more consolidated, these more recently opened frontiers are home to migrants who had arrived by the 1990s, but are only now emerging as political actors in the public sphere.

3.1 Diamantino Municipality

3.1.1 Introduction to Diamantino Municipality

The landscape is surprisingly devastated in Diamantino, our southernmost study site. Only a few interviewees were able to keep small forested areas as legal reserve in their plots. Not only had the trees gone, but the entire landscape was a scene of environmental degradation. The impoverishment of the environment is perceived in relation to the impoverishment of people:

Nine years ago, when I arrived in these lands, we crossed these lands through a river. Today, that river no longer exists... Now, there are parts of this settlement that turned into shantytown.
(President, Association of Rural Worker Women in the Caetés Settlement)

In contrast with situations in the Transamazon or the interior of Acre, where isolation and lack of infrastructural support from the government are alleged causes of impoverishment and limited political participation, the 236 settlers of Caetés enjoy a relatively good infrastructure. Caetés Settlement is connected to Diamantino town by a paved road, so that settlers need spend less than two hours travelling from their plots to town. In addition to the use of a 100 hectare plot per family, road, houses, electricity and running water are available to the settlers.

However, as the landscape has deteriorated, lack of water has become a critical factor for continued survival. Family farming has become much less common and cattle ranching has become an alternative for those with some accumulated capital. For the majority, however, their allocated land in the settlement is now just a housing plot from which they commute to town on a daily basis in search of jobs, which leads to their further decapitalisation.

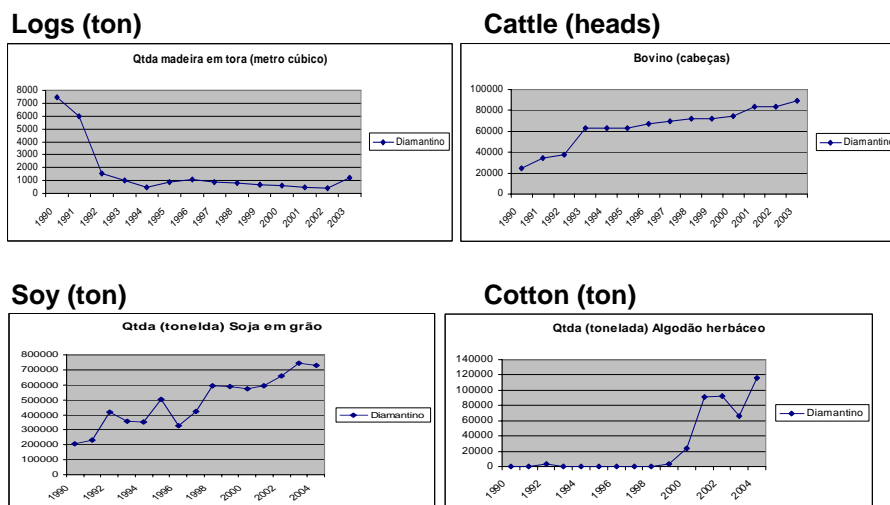
During the day, I stay by myself in the settlement, because I take care of the chickens, which we sell at the settlement and also at town. My dad and brothers work in Diamantino... Like many families here we do not plant anything in our lands. (Young woman, resident settler)

Planting soybeans or cotton for large agro-business enterprises is an attractive option. Big entrepreneurs provide a package (of seeds, agricultural tools/inputs, use of a tractor etc.) to settlers and smallholders for a fixed amount. After harvesting, the settler receives the current sale value of the product, with all costs subtracted. The production from these out-growing schemes supplements production at large soybean estates.

Many smallholders tried this partnership with big agro-business entrepreneurs until the collapse of soy prices in 2004, when it became economically prohibitive for the settlers who suffered that year's losses. Are these losses attributable to scale inefficiencies? Could they have been mitigated by lobbying politicians or government officials? Could an association solve some of the scale issues or political marginalisation? Would credit be facilitated if settlers joined together? These are the types of questions that have vexed Caetés associations throughout their history.

Figure 6 depicts a period of decreased logging, against an increase in soybean and cotton production, peaking at 750,000 tons of soy in 2003-2004. This demonstrates the well-established production of soy in this relatively old frontier, in contrast to newer frontiers in Alta Floresta (our northernmost site), which produced 1,600 tons in the same period. As we will see below, Alta Floresta's reaction to the fall in international soy prices was far more notable, particularly for smallholders and settlers involved in out-growing schemes. Cattle numbers are still increasing, albeit at a lower rate, reaching 90,000 heads in Diamantino in 2004, in contrast to 650,000 in Alta Floresta.

Figure 5. Production of logs, cattle, soy and cotton in Diamantino Municipality



Source: IBGE - Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Census Bureau), 2005

3.1.2 Case study associations in the Caetés Settlement

In 1997, people from diverse origins throughout Mato Grosso and other states assumed a non-violent occupation of a cattle ranch, with no resistance from the owner. The occupation was organised by the Rural Workers' Union and led to the creation of the Caetés Settlement. A leading committee was formed, comprising the oldest male leader from each of the groups moving to the settlement. However, when INCRA took control of the process, it became necessary to appoint a body to legally represent the settlers' rights. Thus, the April 17 Association of Small Rural Producers was founded.

The older men, who had represented and organised the groups under their command, were unable to play a role in this new association due to government exclusions of representatives without good reading and writing skills. These criteria led to the disbanding of the leading committee. Although the association's new board of directors tried to work alongside the older leaders, they could not prevent the disaggregation of the groups now living in the settlement. Eight months after the creation of the first association, a second association emerged – the Association of Small Rural Producers. However, disagreements on how to relate to the state and access public investments continued to prevent settlement progress.

Two years later, in 2000, the convergence of two distinct interests led to the creation of a third association, the Association of Rural Worker Women. This was the result of women wanting to organise themselves and seek public investment for their own work, at the same time as encouragement from a city commissioner who had heard about women's associations elsewhere. Party-politics have played a key role in this association's interactions both within and outside of the settlement.

By bringing together politicians and local leaders, the Association of Rural Worker Women managed to attract and negotiate R\$3 million for a settlement consolidation programme, in partnership with INCRA, Diamantino Municipality and the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB).

When they told me the donor would come and wanted to see something special, I said: 'Oh, my God, what am I going to show to him?'... We decided to show him the work of a man who produces bars of brown sugar in a manual machine... also, to visit a family who run a cassava flourmill in a traditional way, with those large wheels to move the grinder. And finally, we would go to the plot of a family who has managed to run its farm properly, conserving the legal reserve... Some months later, they told us the project was approved. (Female leader, settler)

All of the initiatives described in the statement above were controlled by a family unit, but each involved several neighbours and peers. The fact that these initiatives comprised informal enterprises does not imply that they failed to practice clear, culturally defined rules of associativism and entrepreneurship. Nor

does their informal employment of workers imply that they failed to provide jobs or produce collectively appropriated goods. It was these invisible, informal micro-enterprises that the IDB programme officer witnessed that led to financial support. But the informal status did result in the leaders of the three associations not being able to reach an agreement as to how the new funds should be allocated.

Party-politics were at the core of these disagreements. At the time the project was negotiated, there was no consensus among leaders on who they should vote for in municipal mayoral elections. Two new candidates for the post were pressuring association leaders for support. However, the president of the Association of Rural Worker Women decided to support the unsuccessful re-election of the city commissioner who had helped the women create their association.

When the project was approved, the April 17 Association of Small Rural Producers which had supported the newly elected Mayor's campaign, was chosen as the formal beneficiary. A scheme was subsequently put in place to marginalise the Association of Rural Worker Women. The scheme was deemed necessary because the IDB officer responsible for project financing had been guided by a leader of the women's association during his initial visit.

The donor knew that we were women. Everybody knew that women were the ones supposed to run the project. They needed a woman's signature. In the April 17 Association, the first and the second positions in the board of directors, which were in charge of signing documents, were men. So, they decided to let the president leave, so that the second position became first, and the third position, which was taken by a woman, came up to the second position. So that a woman could sign the document to receive the project. (Female leader, settler)

The resources from the IDB were indeed sent to the local bank for the settlement project. However, due to the disagreements that followed, the money remained in the bank for an entire year. According to technical staff hired to run the project, not all planned activities will be implemented, and there is insufficient capacity and training available for the three associations to accomplish the tasks.

Tensions and divisions continue between the three associations. Each association also faces internal problems. The Association of Rural Worker Women, for example, which is run by an all-women board of directors, has not managed to attract many women to participate effectively. Although women are the official members of the association, in reality their husbands pay their membership fees and participate in the ongoing projects. The association is organising the collective commercialisation of milk by a processing factory. They are currently tied to a single buyer, but would like to buy a freezer to allow them to sell to the highest bidder. The implementers of this scheme, however, are all men who want to remove the reference to women in the association's name and

open it up to men. Among a diverse range of projects by the association involving roads, electricity, habitation, and schools, the only project that attracted women was school reform. According to the current president, women tend not to get involved for two reasons: firstly, because their husbands do not allow them; and secondly, because the association does not deal with issues of interest to them.

Key findings:

- Associations exist in a context of competitive globalisation and environmental degradation, and have not yet found ways of preventing social impoverishment.
- As imposed forms of social organisation, associations displace other traditional forms of organisation practiced by settlers.
- Micro-enterprises and associations could offer fertile ground to develop partnerships in frontier settings.
- Party-politics have been one of the most influential factors in determining the longevity of associations.
- Gender issues in associations have not been properly addressed.

3.2 Nova Ubitatã Municipality

3.2.1 Introduction to the Boa Esperança/Entre-Rios Settlement

Going northward, from Diamantino to Alta Floresta, our survey reached the municipality of Nova Ubitatã. The Boa Esperança/Entre-Rios Settlement has 32,690 hectares of forested land and is home to 408 families, which each have a plot of 70 hectares. Although less devastated than at the Caetés Settlement, water supply is also a problem for Boa Esperança/Entre-Rios where it is only found in deep bore holes, which few settlers are able to dig. While our research team was in the settlement, a pipe-truck from the municipality was taking water to plots without wells. Although the association was organising a list of families in need, it was clear that the truck would not be able to reach all the families on the list. A river crosses through part of the settlement – families with plots in this area have built their houses on its banks to solve the water shortage problem, but this has led to landslides and outbreaks of malaria.

Our research team participated in an association meeting to listen to discussions on access to rural credit lines including PADEQ (Programme of Alternatives to Deforestation and Forest Fires) and PRONAF (National Programme to Strengthen Family Farming). Members were waiting for the meeting to start, when an indigenous woman arrived with her young baby. Although the other women tried to welcome her, the discomfort of not knowing what to do with the unexpected participant was visible. But in spite of their diverse backgrounds, the problems seemed the same for all:

I already got three malarias here, and my one year-old son is in his fifth malaria crisis just now. (Indigenous woman who married a settler and now is residing on the riverbank)

Due to the limited opportunities working on family farms, many settlers seek day jobs at cattle ranches or with logging companies. An alternative typical job is extracting roots for large enterprises on soy, sorghum, corn or rice plantations. Some settlers are forced to work day jobs most of the time. Interviewees cite three main problems limiting the opportunities for family farming: lack of credit, difficult access to water, and degraded soils. The combination of these three problems makes cattle ranching an attractive alternative to family farming since it is easier to access credit for cattle ranching and lack of water and poor soils are less limiting.

Funds to support alternative forms of production (such as PADEQ), are the only incentive for farmers to invest in the recuperation of degraded lands through for example, honey production. However, such alternatives have not been able to compensate for market forces that have driven production activities and led to forest degradation.

3.2.2 Case study associations in the Boa Esperança/Entre Rios Settlement

In 1998, immigrants from the southern state of Santa Catarina and the northeastern state of Maranhão began to occupy the lands of Boa Esperança. Since then, the number of settlers has further increased with newcomers from the southern states of Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul and the southeastern state of São Paulo. The settlers from Maranhão are part of a peasantry formed by the descendants of enslaved Africans and detribalised indigenous peoples. They have a unique agro-extractive system of production, combining slash-and-burn shifting cultivation with extractive activities. The settlers from the south are mostly farmers of European descent whose system of production is more market integrated. There are many differences between these groups but they have shared a common search for a 'land without landlords' where they can 'work without a boss'. Both groups struggled to survive the challenges of the first years of settlement:

We arrived and we were camping on the land. We kept waiting for an answer from INCRA. Seven years ago, there were only forests. Today the forests are already exploited. It is no longer possible to make a living just from the land and forests. Now we have to search for outside jobs. The first immigrants had timber to sell and survive. Now we no longer have timber. The ones who can survive here, without working for a boss, working only for themselves, are those who had brought some resources with them. Those who sold the timber and left are better off now. Those who sold the timber and remained, ended up spending everything on food, without getting anything. (Settler in Boa Esperança/Entre Rios)

In spite all these problems people continue their struggle for survival in the frontier. Some of those who sold the timber and land still remain in the area, living in the Agrovila (a village with some urban facilities for landless and settlers), located close to the settlement. The village is home to about 80 resident families, mostly landless people, many of whom run small businesses (food stores etc.). Today, there are still families applying for a piece of land, either for plots as settlers or for urban plots as Agrovila residents. Settlers can buy an area in the village to build a house, but as there is no transportation available and distances are far, many are left with no access to schools or health posts.

In the settlement's first year, settlers were asked to create an association – the Association of Rural Workers in the Boa Esperança/Entre Rios settlement – which is now in its fourth term of office and supports 408 settler families. The association is organised into five sub-groups, each with its own coordinator. Our research team participated in meetings by each of the five groups. While participation at some meetings was high, it was almost non-existent at others. Women made up less than 25 per cent of the participants. However, the association president mentioned that at the last association election more than 100 people from one sub-group alone showed up to vote. It seems that although people are not interested in the association's day-to-day membership duties, they are keen to ensure that a president and board of directors are appointed who can support improvements and change.

The association's previous two terms of office did not achieve much, because the directors were unable to overcome the isolation caused by the large distances in the settlement. According to interviewees, the third board of directors became involved in the illegal sale of plots and timber and earned a percentage of each sale. The last president sold his plot, and now lives in the Agrovila. His connections helped him to find a job in the city hall, thus abandoning the association. One member, a settler who had emigrated from the south, organised others to run the elections. He is now serving as the current president and under his leadership the new board has started to decentralise the association into the sub-groups mentioned above.

Since then, changes started, with meetings at very grassroots level promoted by the new president and his people. (Association member)

By 'his people' the interviewee above refers to the entire extended family of the new president – his wife, brother and sister-in-law, relatives and other families who came together from southern states. It is interesting to see that in overcoming the difficulties of social organisation, traditional relations such as kinship, 'compadrio' (godparenthood, non-biological form of kinship) and the family unit have assumed unique roles in strengthening associations. The new president's people are perceived as experienced in dealing with associations.

Like his predecessor, the new president is closely involved in party-politics. However, the promises made during his election campaigns did not result in benefits for the association and have thus damaged his reputation. As he is a strong party activist, and was a political candidate in his home state, there are concerns about the outcomes of his mandate. The integration of party-politics is a challenge faced by all of the groups we visited. As the current mayor is active in the PT, the truck-pipe providing water and the nurse sent by the municipality are both achievements by the association in accessing public resources. These achievements have also increased support for the party by association members.

Corruption and manipulation by dishonest politicians is part of the history of associations. Connected to this, corruption involving IBAMA is also common. When the PT won national and municipal elections, settlers were hopeful and eager for change. However, the PT has recently been linked to numerous scandals involving the corrupt use of natural resources, especially in Mato Grosso. Due to links between the current board and the PT, the credibility of the association is at risk. An example of the complexity of relations is demonstrated by the process of securing a plot in the settlement, or the right to build a house in the village. Candidates for a plot of land in either the settlement or the Agrovila are required to submit their names to the association assembly. The power to decide who is granted these rights and the credibility of the decision-makers are important factors delineating the daily life of the association.

Furthermore, some government officials at INCRA are also linked to the PT, resulting in stronger and more complex relationships between the association and government institutions. For example, lack of credit and water leads many people to search for jobs outside the settlement. Many settlers leave their land to work in cattle ranches and sawmills for up to 20 days a month. This has led to allegations by INCRA that these commuters are abandoning the settlement and should leave their land to others who need it more. An agreement has now been reached between INCRA and the association. The association is required to sign a document for each settler, guaranteeing that those people working outside of the settlement are returning with resources to help make their plots productive. However, there have been cases where the association has not approved the document and allegations of favouritism have arisen. The association is considering allowing only 15 work days (per month) in outside jobs. If a settler does not have this document signed by the association and someone denounces the settler for abandonment of his plot, INCRA can revoke their rights to the land. The role of the association as a representative of the settlers, and its relationship with INCRA as a representative of the government is not clear in this matter.

The poorest settlers allege that they are forced to sell their labour during the harvest period because landlords will only hire labourers that commit to working the full 60 days of the harvest. Those who remain in the settlement, assert that they have made an effort and struggled to organise and deal with INCRA. Referring to settlers who seek employment elsewhere are comments such as: *'When you come back, you find everything ready, bringing money to buy your*

cattle, without spending money and resources in our organisation.' But settlers who work away argue that 'to stay and sell timber [illegally] is also wrong.'

There was no consensus on how to best conduct the relationship between the board of directors, INCRA and association members. The board of directors hopes that, credit opportunities offered by PRONAF will reduce the flow of settlers leaving for outside jobs. However, they also know that many settlers have been unable to pay back their loans under last year's PRONAF programme. Only those who spent the credit on cattle were successful, but these initiatives were officially illegal on account of the deforestation caused. This year there is a ray of hope. As part of a new public policy, the government has promised that a technical team will live in the settlement and assist settlers throughout the entire year. This will be a marked improvement on last year when opportunities to consult PRONAF's technical team were limited.

Key findings:

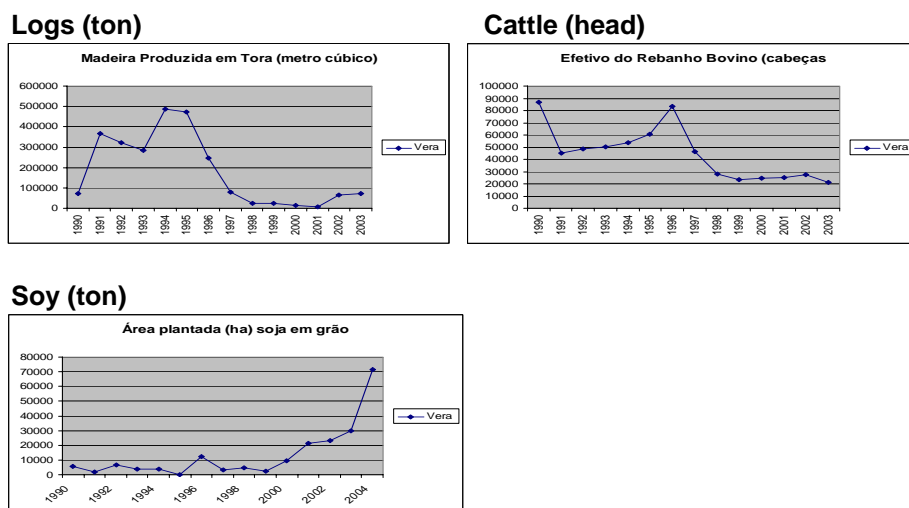
- Associations have to deal with power differentials and ethnic diversity among members.
- Instruments to deal with economic and ecological challenges, such as alternative forms of credit, have not been enough to challenge global trends.
- The ideal of 'land without a landlord' and 'work without a boss' is one of the strong common desires within diverse groups of settlers.
- Decentralisation of activities helps associations get closer to grassroots matters and may prevent abuse of power.
- Party-politics intersect with other aspects affecting associations – economic differences among members and ecological differences in the resources they use.

3.3 Vera Municipality

3.3.1 Introduction to Vera Municipality

Vera Municipality was created through an initiative by a private colonisation enterprise – the Northern Paraná Real Estate Society (SINOP), which was responsible for colonising northern Mato Grosso together with the Integration and Regional Development Colonisation Enterprise (COLIDER) and the Integration, Development and Colonisation Enterprise (INDECO). In 1972, SINOP bought 48,670 km² of land and began to create urban nuclei. One of them became Vera Municipality (Rosendo, 2004). Logging was one of the economic pillars that sustained this process of colonisation in Vera. As can be seen in the graphs below, logging was closely followed by cattle ranching and, more recently by soybean plantations.

Figure 6. Production of logs, cattle, and soy in Vera Municipality



Source: IBGE, 2005

The BR-163 highway was initially set to cut through colonised land in Vera, but ultimately ended up intersecting another area. The alternative area became a municipality in its own right, named after the pioneer enterprise – SINOP. Lack of transport infrastructure meant that investment bypassed Vera Municipality and family agriculture was not consolidated as initially planned (Rosendo, 2004). Furthermore, most of the immigrants were workers who had been brought to the area by logging companies. Once these pioneers had sold all the trees from their allocated land, more than half of them sold their land too and left Vera. It was the second wave of immigrants, who bought land from the departing pioneers that began to invest in family farming.

Logging companies built the first of Vera's roads. But when the settlement projects started, the government built more roads. Lately, the introduction and expansion of soybean plantations has changed the situation yet again. It is now agro-business that transforms the landscape. The settlement projects in the municipality face the impacts of soybean out-growing schemes. In the Califórnia Settlement, plots are relatively small – 230 families each have plots of 25 to 30 hectares, but many association members have come to agreements with big soybean enterprises.

3.3.2 Case study associations in the Califórnia Settlement

In 1999, the Association of Rural Workers in the Califórnia Settlement was created by 230 members, with a shared purpose of registering themselves as beneficiaries of INCRA's programme for agrarian reform.

At that time, it was hard because members were very individualistic, many of them were employees at sawmills, making good earnings, and their only interest was to have their names on INCRA's list so that they could access and later sell a plot of land. In addition, at that time, the government did not engage in partnerships with local organisations like now. (Current president of the association)

In 2002, a new board of directors assumed leadership, but shortly after his election, the president sold his plot and left the settlement. In that year, a large number of settlers sold their land and left due to the precarious conditions at the settlement. The association almost fell apart, but some members created a temporary commission and in 2004, the president who served on the first board of directors was re-appointed. With lessons learned from their previous experiences, the board of directors and the remaining 160 members defined the following strategy to reorganise the association:

1. Men and women should be members.
2. Couples are only required to pay one annual membership fee.
3. A community lunch will be held every third Sunday of the month.
4. All association resources should be accounted by an accredited bookkeeper, who must present financial reports to the fiscal council every three months and annually to the assembly.
5. The board of directors should meet monthly.

The community lunch is considered a great celebration with attendance by whole families. Each family brings food, which is then prepared communally in a large kitchen. Young people also participate, organising games (such as bingos based on commemorative dates). Barbecues and leisure activities are organised for younger children. At the end of the day, time is set aside to pay fees and contributions and organise pending documents. The current board of directors is trying to encourage and mobilise members by focusing on issues they encounter in their daily lives. The board recently organised a members' dinner to discuss a project for the production of smoked pork meat. 22 producers were expected, but 60 attended the dinner.

The focus on young people (who represent 12 per cent of the association's members) is important. The directors are currently establishing a partnership between the association and the municipality to implement youth programmes (up to high school level) and to build a sports facility at the settlement.

The assembly of members has produced a work plan for the association which board of directors is seeking to implement via partnerships. Currently, the Amazon Working Group (GTA) – a non-government network linked to the PPG7 (Pilot Programme to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest), is the association's main partner. Pipeline projects include: improving the association headquarters, building milk and pork agro-industry facilities, increasing the production of fruit and honey, and researching the potential of biodiesel. Achievements to date include: setting up school transport systems, installing telephones at the

settlement, starting a community radio station, and acquiring computers for the school.

In 2001-2002, the association gained access to electricity for the settlement through the federal programme 'Light in the countryside'. During the same agricultural year, the association also managed to access credit (through PRONAF) for 96 members. Most of these members invested in traditional crops, such as cattle, rice, cassava, corn and soybean. (Other members were unable to access credit due to a lack of personal identification documents).

Many members planted soy until 2003-2004 under an out-growing scheme agreement with Cargill and Bunge. Cargill and Bunge provided sufficient seed, fertiliser and other agricultural inputs (including tools) to produce 30 sacks of soy per hectare. Community members were responsible for improving the soil, and providing labour and diesel (for machinery). The total production was actually around 55 sacks per hectare. Until 2004, these agreements worked well for both parties, but in 2004-2005, the fall of soy prices impacted hard on the small producers.

The association looked into acquiring a soybean grain dryer, but since soy prices have fallen, this project has been put on hold. The Ministry of Agrarian Development is currently promoting discussions on sunflower and castor oil bean for biofuel production.

Other relationships with government sectors relate to education. In 2002, the association established a school with four classrooms, to cater for first to fourth grade students. In partnership with the municipality the association is now trying to extend the school to educate children up to the eighth grade. In 2006, together with PRONERA (the INCRA-led National Programme for Education in Agrarian Reform Areas) the association will also facilitate adult access to education.

The association also deals with small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. For example, it has helped to open new roads within the settlement. The association initiated a competition among entrepreneurs to find out which enterprise could offer the best cost-benefits for construction services. The winner was a small entrepreneur who agreed to accept timber as his prize, which he then sold to local sawmills.

Key findings:

- Members' experiences accumulate over time – even if it takes multiple attempts to get an association that works.
- Investments in youth are essential to the organic and sustainable functioning of associations.
- Broad social and environmental aims and objectives within associations' work plans, promote greater participation and improve gender equality.
- Frontier settings provide fertile ground for deals between micro- and small enterprises and associations.

3.4 Tabaporã Municipality

3.4.1 Introduction to the Mercedes I and II Settlement

More than 600 families live in the Mercedes I and II Settlement, which is made up of 1,012 plots of 100 hectares. In this settlement, issues of soy expansion and power differentials among association members are controversial issues. Many problems within and between associations are related to the impacts of globalisation and the expansion of the soybean industry.

3.4.2 Case study associations in the Mercedes Settlement

The Mercedes Settlement is home to five associations, as well as an association for the residents of the Mercedes Agrovila and a cooperative – the Electricity, Telephone and Rural Development Cooperative.

The first association – Agro-Rio, was created for the entire settlement. However, following political disagreements between the Agro-Rio president and the president of the rural union, the latter founded a second association supported by the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), the Brazilian Labour Party (PTB), and the Progressive Party (PP). Later, three other associations were also created.

The creation of the cooperative can be traced back to the demands of government bureaucracy. In 2003, the president of Agro-Rio, the first association, was seeking to access electricity and credit for the settlement under the federal programme 'Electricity for All'. At the same time, a small private enterprise was using a waterfall to provide electricity for some families in the surrounding areas. The association managed to get support from the federal government (led by the PT) to implement a system of electricity distribution. However, it was necessary to create a cooperative, due to prohibitions on associations dealing with profitable activities. 20 people formed the cooperative and the project was developed in partnership with the federal government. The State Electricity Centre was instrumental in implementing the project. Due to party-politics, the State did not agree to participate in the project itself.

In light of the impasse, the association set up the cooperative to develop a small-scale project for a generator and electricity distribution to the settlement. A private enterprise provided the hydroelectric structure and distribution up to the main roads of the settlement. From here, settlers were able to connect the supply to their home in return for a fee to the company based on the number of electrical appliances or machinery in his/her plot. Not all settlers can afford electricity, which is mostly used by the residents of the Agrovila.

In addition to the electricity project, the cooperative also won an INCRA competition and is now in charge of purchasing and distributing construction materials for the settlement. This project however, was not well designed

because the cooperative does not have access to enough capital to buy these materials in large quantities and thus benefit from scale efficiencies. The cooperative is also in charge of distributing the funds due to each settler to allow them to hire construction workers. According to INCRA and the president of the cooperative, this project was nevertheless a good deal. Reports from a president of one of the five municipal associations (who is also a member of the cooperative), however, indicate that mistrust and complaints, by the settlers about the cooperative's services, are common. This interviewee perceives these complaints to be somewhat misplaced since the cooperative does not gain any profit from its work and is plagued by bouncing cheques from members. The informant believes that this is the key damaging factor to the cooperative's reputation.

According to another member (the wife of the vice-president), there are some settlers who receive materials, but do not build their houses. Some ask the cooperative to deliver the materials to another settler, who they sell them on to – sometimes at prices lower than the real cost. In some cases, settlers that choose to sell on their materials already have a house, but in most cases they live in huts on their plots and use their rights to these infrastructural investments to pay for maintenance costs. Worst-case scenarios, illustrating the chaos in INCRA, are experienced by those who receive their investment resources, but without the necessary documents recognising them as settlers. Unsure that they will be able to remain on the land, they do not want to expend their resources on fixed investments.

In addition to the five settlers' associations and the cooperative, an association was set up for the Agrovila residents in 2003. According to the president, the association was founded because the first association, Agro-Rio was unable to support the Agrovila. Now the Agrovila association has 701 members. As apparent in other associations, those interviewed in the Agrovila presented many cases of misconduct among directors:

The previous president of our association was legally charged because he did not present the financial reports of projects under his responsibility. He earned R\$300,000 from illegal sale of plots and this money was shared between him and the financial director, who bought three houses and an ice-cream shop in the Agrovila.
(Anonymous informant)

Our research team did not investigate this legal case. For the purposes of this research, what really matters is how people perceive the leadership and functionality of his/her association, irrespective of the truth of different allegations.

There is a strong rivalry between the current president of the Agrovila Association and the current president of the Agro-Rio Association. These rivalries and conflicts are not limited to leadership level, but are also common among members, where there are large power differentials. For example, the owner of the rice and soybean dryer and storage facilities is also a member of

the Agrovila association. These facilities are located in the Agrovila, but also serve the settlers. The owner is supported by a politician, a large entrepreneur, the former secretary of agriculture in Blairo Maggi, and the governor of Mato Grosso. According to interviewees, the politician in question is currently responding to a legal case alleging illicit behaviour, but still has the support of the governor. This politician's support to the owner of the grain dryer gives the owner greater power in the many conflicts he has with association members. Currently, the owner is in dispute with a woman settler. According to the owner, she sold her plot to him, but later returned to occupy it. He is urging politicians and the Agrovila Association to expel her from the disputed land.

Key findings:

- Micro- and small enterprises fill gaps and provide services and goods where enterprises of greater scale cannot operate in the frontier.
- The current chaos observed at INCRA and IBAMA affects associations in matters of importance to members.
- Administrative misconduct and lack of ethics among leaders are frequent factors contributing to the failure of an association.
- Clear criteria for membership prevents a conflict of interests within associations, and should also lead to an improved code of ethics.

3.5 Cláudia Municipality

3.5.1 Case study associations in Cláudia Municipality

The Association of Amazon Forest Handcrafters only works with wood that has fallen naturally in the forest. The group was created in 2002, with an initial membership of 25. Support was provided by an active social worker linked to the municipal government. Initially, the municipality allocated the association a space in the central town square, so that artisans could display their products. Even with this government support, however, commercialisation was not easy, and many participants gave up. Recognising the need to improve the quality of their products, supporters and leaders sought help from the Brazilian Secretary of Entrepreneurship (SEBRAE). SEBRAE supported the association with training in design, management skills and institutional development. Members then went on to formalise the group and gain legal status for the association.

Many associations start with support from NGOs and later seek support from government funds. But the handcrafters' association began as a result of a government initiative and was initially supported by public institutions. In 2004, the town square was set to be re-built and traders were to be displaced. The association sought support from an NGO, the Agro-forestry and Environmental Protection Group (GAPA), which helped them access a new space for trading. Currently, about 15 artisans run a small shop in Cláudia Municipality and sell sculptures and small utensils made of bark and wood. Members pay monthly fees of R\$5 (December 2005, less than US\$2) and a 10 per cent sales tax which covers their rent and wages for one salesperson. Sales are mostly to the few

tourists visiting Cláudia. But the low volume of sales is the main constraint to their initiative.

GAPA is a multi-disciplinary association that was created in 1998. Producers, teachers, artisans and public employees are engaged in environmental education through campaigns (mostly in schools). In partnership with the local government and 20 private land owners, GAPA is restoring the Loreto River and the Paulo Viriato Correa da Costa Forest Park. One of their main projects is an initiative for the production of organic fertilisers, in partnership with the local loggers' association. Funds come from the federal government through the Programme of Support for the Development of Industry and Commerce (PADIC). Two thirds of the funds are used by GAPA, and the remainder by the local loggers' association. The project's management commission comprises four members from GAPA and two from the loggers' association.

The fertiliser consists of sawmill residues (50 per cent), chicken droppings (20 per cent), phosphate and a biocatalyst (30 per cent). The biocatalyst is purchased from Bioexton, a foreign-owned enterprise that patented the product (which was developed in partnership with the University of Uberaba in Minas Gerais State and to whom royalties are paid). Loggers provide timber residue from their sawmills for free, since it is cheaper to do so than to pay for cleaning their facilities. The municipality contributes the transportation of sawmill waste to GAPA.

An active female environmentalist from southern Brazil is the main mentor and manager of this arrangement that brings together government, private and grassroots organisations. She is also a micro-entrepreneur who experiments in the conservation of primary forest and forest recuperation through an agroforestry system on her 35 hectares of land. According to this environmentalist, the financial costs of the organic fertiliser are equal to those of chemical fertilisers, but with the advantage of being environmentally safe. GAPA's promotional video shows how positive the results are, especially given the low set-up cost for equipment and facilities (R\$140,000). The group is seeking to run further tests, before exploring broader markets.

Key findings:

- Accords, partnerships and alliances between producers and loggers require firm criteria and conditions.
- Further research is necessary into the role of catalysts and related processes in associations.
- The more mature associations have increasingly sought to professionalise their sales activities and identify alternative markets.

3.6 Terra Nova do Norte Municipality

3.6.1 Case study associations in Terra Nova do Norte Municipality

The Cooperative of Ecological Producers in the Amazon Gate Region (COOPERAGREPA), founded in 2003, deals with the production and commercialisation of organic products. It works in 10 municipalities through 32 rural sub-groups, each working in one of 11 product areas. Production systems are currently most developed for brown sugar, chicken, honey, eggs, and milk. These products are not yet certified, but the production and processing systems follow organic production standards and leaders are currently applying for certification. The cooperative has appointed an agricultural technician (approved by the local government) in each of the 10 municipalities.

Since 2001, participants have been involved in exchange trips to southern Brazil to learn about experiences in cooperativism. According to the cooperative's president and agronomist members, consumers are not aware of the different types of producers (e.g. grassroots, large enterprise) or the importance of product origin. Therefore, prices cannot include social costs, and must be similar to costs for other organic products in this alternative market. The cooperative has quickly learned that they need to have commercial outlets or sale representatives at diverse locations (such as itinerant fairs) and cannot rely on telemarketing for this type of business. They have also linked up with a Mato Grosso supermarket chain, and with municipal authorities to provide products for school meals. The cooperative's next goal is to reach markets in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, as well as in Germany.

Key findings:

- Although associations are imposed forms of social representation and organisation, there are many alternative formats that can be adapted for specific needs and situations.
- Certification is an instrument available to few associations.
- Progress in the commercialisation of associations' products will only be made when consumers are aware of the social cost differences between micro- and small and large enterprises.

3.7 Alta Floresta Municipality

3.7.1 Introduction to Alta Floresta Municipality

Alta Floresta was the last of the study sites. Interviews with key informants led us to find significant similarities between the fruit and honey producer associations of Alta Floresta and other associations that we had already visited. We therefore decided to gain some new insights by focusing our research here on alternative forms of organisation.

Alta Floresta Municipality is located in the extreme north of Mato Grosso, 800 km from the capital Cuiabá. Alta Floresta now boasts a population of 50,000 inhabitants, 80 per cent of whom live in urban areas. Alta Floresta is a major centre in a region that has seen the creation of many municipalities due to the construction of the BR-163 highway. In the 1970s, settlement was initiated by private colonisation firms and government settlement projects for agrarian reform. The colonisation firm INDECO, and the federal and state governments introduced thousands of migrants, aiming at the cultivation of coffee, cocoa, guaraná etc. In the 1980s, however, Alta Floresta became the focus of a gold mining rush, leading to a population increase of 12 per cent per year. By the start of the 1990s, the 'golden years' had come to an end and the residents of Alta Floresta were left to deal with narcotraffic, prostitution and other related problems. Since the mid-1990s, logging and cattle ranching have taken over as the main economic activities, but these have not solved the social problems of Alta Floresta⁶.

3.7.2 Case study associations in Alta Floresta Municipality

The Esteio Family Farm is a micro-enterprise that employs seasonal labourers in addition to children and permanent workers from two aggregated families. The owners are a married couple – Ércio (a German descendant) and Cleuza (an Italian descendant) – who have lived on their 80 hectare property for 25 years. Ércio manages the production of fish, milk, fruit, honey, poultry and pigs, as well as a reforestation area. Cleuza is responsible for administering and commercialising the production system. All employees are able to access to their labour rights and those who are involved in milking earn 30 per cent of the production.

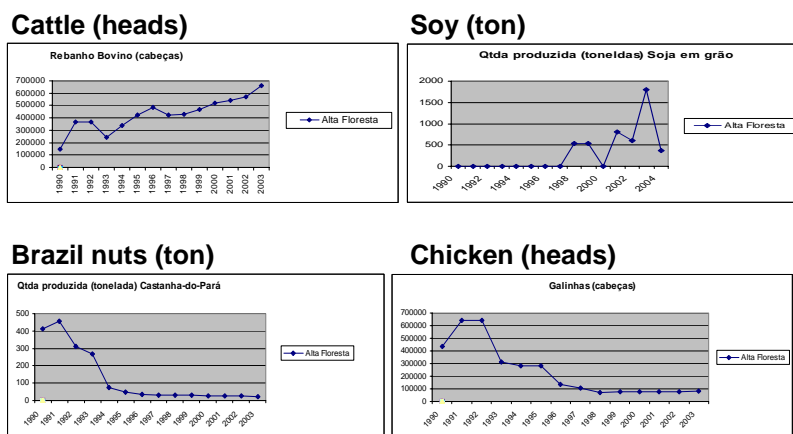
In 1976, the predominant idea in Mato Grosso was to cut down every tree, to plant soy and get rich. With these ideas, we arrived at Mato Grosso do Sul. But in that year there was a heavy drought, and we moved to Mato Grosso. Like other migrants, we tried to plant cocoa, coffee, coconut, but there were no supporting policies, and all the plants were lost. Later, many invested in cattle and gold mining... at the time of the fruit cultivation, the municipality launched a project for a factory of fruits pastes, but it was just a white elephant. In fact, local politicians grabbed all the fruit cultivation resources and deviated everything from its original plans. Each recommended species was planted as a monoculture. After two or three years, as each crop failed in the market, it was just slashed and pastures were planted in its place. These monocultures were planted through credit by Bank of Brazil, and many are in debt until today. (Ércio, micro-entrepreneur)

⁶ See the School of Amazonia Local Agenda 21 website for information about Alta Floresta <http://www.escoladaamazonia.com.br/html/alta.html>

Ércio suggested to us that universities could transform systems for family production by sending professionals to work and undertake research in smallholdings; listening to and providing technical assistance for producers; and promoting exchange programmes among farmers. Without such an initiative, smallholder production controlled by farmers is likely to disappear. In the northern part of Mato Grosso, small farmers are renting their land to large enterprises to plant soy, cotton and rice.

In this northernmost case study site, the rapid growth of cattle ranching continues with production reaching 650,000 heads in 2004. Soy plantations have only recently been introduced (producing 1,600 tons in 2003-2004) but the impacts of this on family farming can already be seen in the declining production of chicken and Brazil nuts. The 2005 decrease in soy production was due to the 2004-2005 fall in prices.

Figure 7. Production of cattle, soy, Brazil nuts and chicken in Alta Floresta Municipality



Source: IBGE, 2005

During his first six years in Mato Grosso, Ércio worked in civil construction. The family lived in the town for three years, and later moved to the farm, where they invested the money Ércio had earned from his construction work.

While many sold their lands to invest in gold mining, we decided to invest our family labour in fish farming. In the beginning it was not easy. The dream of fish farming suffered three big disasters. The fish eggs were brought and died three times. We had to buy everything again. The alevines came by plane from Natal and technical orientation came by phone from the University of Natal...The big difference between our farm and others was the privilege of being close to town. If we lived far away, we would have to organise communities to plant up to two or three products and

commercialise together. Individually, we have to diversify the most we can. (Ércio, micro-entrepreneur)

Recently the couple has started to examine the possibilities for ecotourism and search out potential loans for this. According to Cleuza, the core question for the family micro-enterprise is cohesion among family members:

Small farmers are no longer united and their families are unstructured, because there is no labour division within the family, and so, the family businesses go down. Most of the youth go to town and stay there unemployed, the school cannot accept all. The youth themselves do not unite for social work and although the church has pastorals, it cannot hold the youth. (Cleuza, micro-entrepreneur)

In addition to running their own micro-enterprise, the couple are also social entrepreneurs and provide training in alternative farming to community leaders (sent by rural unions), municipal agriculture secretaries, and other association/community members. The training programme includes one day in the field. Leaders return to their communities with a mission to implement small projects. 19 municipalities already participate in the training programme, with four participants per municipality. Ércio donates 200,000 post-larvae fish to the municipalities in charge of reservoir resources and believes that the training has had positive results.

Key findings:

- Micro-enterprises can strengthen forest governance – creating innovative and diverse landscape mosaics rather than large monocultures – while complying with existing legislation.
- Associations should be prepared to face the challenges of out-growing schemes.
- The basic unit forming the association is the family. Attention to family integrity and general well-being is thus a key issue.
- Micro-enterprises may help strengthen associations.

4. Contrasting lessons from research sites in Mato Grosso, Acre and Pará

In common with research findings from Acre and Pará, this study reveals that local actors and their institutions have made a significant impact on transforming the frontier. Although international and national policies are integral and powerful factors affecting these transformations, equally strong determinants are how social groups interact among themselves and engage in collective actions. One example of collective action which has overcome unfavourable policies is the 'Movement for the Development of the Transamazônica and Xingu' in Pará. Another is the 'MAP Initiative' – the coalition of government and non-government

organisations in the tri-national frontier comprised of **M**adre de Dios in Peru, **A**cre in Brazil and **P**ando in Bolivia.

The Mobilisation of Social Movements along the BR-163 is a further example of a collective action. This initiative was set up by a number of grassroots organisations from Mato Grosso and Pará, namely the Foundation for Living, Preserving and Producing (FVPP), the Federation of Lower Amazon Agricultural Workers (FETAGRI-BAM), a research NGO (IPAM) and the Catholic Church. These organisations supported the launch of a debate on the paving of the BR-163. From 2001 to 2004, they catalysed meetings among local associations, other organisations and the local, state and national governments. In 2003, this network of organisations drew up a proposal for the development of the areas affected by the BR-163 highway, the Transamazon highway and the Xingu River. In 2004, the Mobilisation of Social Movements along the BR-163 presented the 'Sustainable and Integrated Territorial Development Plan of the Region affected by the BR-163' to government authorities and society in general. All of the associations described in this study have participated in this process of mobilisation. In this context of social mobilisation, we have learned the lessons below.

4.1. Cohesion – reasons behind the formation of associations

In Acre and Pará study sites, almost all associations were created for financial reasons (e.g. credit, cash, economic projects or other financial deals). The same is true for associations in Mato Grosso. But these reasons alone cannot be strong enough to cement an association's internal cohesion. We learned that in the process of struggling for financial support, other reasons and processes emerge. Greater participation in political processes may lead to cohesion for the association or to at least segments of it. Parallel to the continuous search for financial support, processes of self-help also emerge.

The role of the FNO (Constitutional Fund for Financing the North) credit line was frequently drawn to our attention as we studied associations in the Transamazon and Acre. Unlike in Acre and Pará, however, the associations in Mato Grosso emerged in the late 1990s, and therefore had less involvement with the FNO (Tura 2000, cited in Campos *et al.*, 2005). Instead, associations in Mato Grosso sought funds from PRONAF and later PADEQ. Both of these credit lines took note of the FNO's failures and incorporated most of the demands made by social movements to the FNO. In spite of the FNO's bottom-up process to obtain credit, problems arose during project implementation that the social movements had little capacity to solve. In many places, FNO funds led to social and environmental disasters. Many colonists used their credit to buy cattle but since the quality of the cattle and the available pastures were insufficient, returns were low and environmental costs high. Throughout the Transamazon, most colonists were unable to repay their debts to the bank. Some managed to negotiate their debts, but others gave up and are now prohibited from accessing further credit.

Despite some lesson learning from FNO problems such as these, PRONAF and PADEQ failed to address others issues, for example the mandatory requirement of forming an association to access credit. In Acre and Pará, the FNO catalysed a wave of new associations created purely out of the need for credit. This was also true of PRONAF.

4.2. Resilience – credibility and legitimacy of decision-making

It was encouraging to find positive examples of democracy in Acre and Pará associations, where a large majority of respondents considered themselves eligible for association presidency. Indeed, most presidents here were appointed through election and live within the community. The perception of improved well-being and greater participation of association members is most likely attributable to strong leadership.

The same is true for associations with good leadership in Mato Grosso. It is important to note that credibility and legitimacy of decision making is not transferable from one leader to another, nor from one leader to the entire association, as institutions are not yet sufficiently strong for this. Since many of the formalities of associations have not become embedded in processes understood by members, success is often not attributed to the association itself, but to individual leaders. Interviewees therefore often refer to the mandates of specific leaders or boards of directors.

We have not observed great diversity in the patterns of forest resource use among settlers. Nonetheless, we learned of strategic and heterogeneous groups, who were confronting each other for access to and control over resources. For example, groups of immigrants from the northern states of Maranhão and Pará were interacting with immigrants from the southern states of Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul. The former have black and indigenous backgrounds and focus on subsistence agriculture and local markets; and the latter have European backgrounds and are more integrated in a market-oriented economy. Similar to situations observed in Acre and Pará, social alliances based on shared interests (either material or symbolic) were also observed in Mato Grosso. In our research sites, the role of politics affecting these alliances and disagreements was especially significant.

We learned that in the process of forging these alliances, boundaries between stakeholders are set and identities defined. Although party-politics has a strong influence on association discourses and practices, these boundaries and identities do not always conform to the boundaries set by parties or identities determined by party affiliation. These alliances can often bring people together in specific social or political action, uniting those from different social classes and political affinities to re-shape the social, economic and environmental landscape. This has been observed in the Mobilisation of Social Movements along the BR-163.

4.3. Equity – adequacy of representation of interests

A large majority of interviewees in previous surveys in Acre and Pará reported that associations had helped them become better off. Not surprisingly, most of these individuals intend to continue supporting their association.

Qualitative research findings from Mato Grosso show that people remain association members because it is necessary to do so to access financial support. They do not often perceive that the association itself brings a great advantage, but this perception was not strong enough to make them give up membership. Men's interests are better represented than women's. As in most social movements in the Amazon, husbands prevent wives from participating in organisational meetings. Men usually allege that women need to stay at home to care for the children, while they take care of public matters. In many cases, women agree with these cultural constraints. Naturally, there is a vast range of opinion, from men who state that 'we need to find some work for women to do, because with empty heads, they end up thinking stupidities', to men who are really engaged in helping women overcome gender inequities. On balance, in most of the case study groups, there seems to be significant resistance to change in favour of greater gender equality.

Associations also assume political roles, mediating relationships with diverse government agencies. These interactions take place in specific arenas, each with its own problems of access and bureaucracy. Negotiations take time and energy, demanding numerous trips to distant places. The current gender division limits women's participation.

Women's associations are not necessarily formed in response to women's interests. There is rarely significant investment to find out what women really want. Most existing women's associations were created as a strategy to solve problems of accessing financial support. One clear need is greater space for processes through which women can discuss their aspirations and opportunities for organisation. This then needs to be followed by a stage of resource mobilisation. Meanwhile, as changes towards gender equality are slow, general associations might take a few small steps – for example, setting meeting schedules that allow women to participate.

Members of black, indigenous and other marginalised social groups are largely absent in association gatherings and boards of directors. These groups do have their own forms of organisation but we did not visit places where these are evident. Associations must consider whether better representation of these marginalised groups is a feasible and desirable objective, or whether associations should interact with marginalised groups' own forms of organisation.

4.4. Support – adequacy of external policy and institutional assistance

In Acre and the Transamazon, the success of associations can be largely attributed to cultural unity, bottom-up drive, strong leadership, and importantly, ample external financial support. The Catholic Church for example, focuses on supporting organisations financially, but also helps them to organise and learn their rights. Entities such as the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) tend to focus more on technical and financial support.

In Mato Grosso, migrants arrived with relatively less support from the Church and national/international environment and human rights NGOs. The colonisation process led to an overt influence of private colonisation enterprises. Currently, interviewees in Mato Grosso state that there are not enough technical and organisational support institutions available, making it difficult to access public rights and public and private investments.

In the Acre and Pará study, the role of the Catholic Church and NGOs deserved an important section. In the Mato Grosso sites, these groups do not have such a consolidated presence. Recently, Mato Grosso NGOs have played key roles in helping communities organise and articulate their views more effectively in larger collective actions (such as the Mobilisation of Social Movements along the BR-163), but their sponsorship of grassroots association activities is infrequent at a local level.

4.5. Additional insights

In all three major sites, associations form an important part of people's lives. Associations are becoming the means through which people meet regularly (on average once a month). In Acre and the Transamazon, people complain that association meetings are taking the place of religious and other popular gatherings but in Mato Grosso, associations have existed since the first migrants arrived.

Access to rural credit and benefits from agrarian reform programmes are the primary reasons for forming an association. However, as communities evolve, new associations are sometimes formed due to conflicts in the original association. In both the Transamazon and Acre, unique social movements have emerged as umbrella bodies for many associations. These have demanded specific policies covering issues such as extractive reserves and credit. In Mato Grosso, associations are still a work-in-progress, and maybe the uniqueness of their mobilisation lies in attempts to negotiate the diversities present in these frontiers.

The short life expectancy of associations – six years (as found in the Acre and Pará study) does not seem to be an important issue for interviewees in Mato Grosso. Associations are viewed as a short-lived tool. To date, members have mostly been interested in opportunities to get together and pursue short-term

goals collectively. Local people measure the success of an association by its results. If one tool does not lead to positive results, they will search for another. It did not seem to matter what structure an association took. Formal associations might be dismantled, but the same members, with the addition or dismissal of some individuals, could go on to form another association. The accumulation or erosion of one group's social capital should not be automatically read as the survival or death of a formal association. One of Marx's (1967: 766) greatest lessons was that capital is not a '*thing, but a social relation between persons, established by the instrumentality of things*'. Here, associations are just the instrument. The social relations that are established and strengthened by this or another instrument is what really defines the social capital of a group.

Two questions remain from our contrast of case studies in the states of Acre, Pará and Mato Grosso:

1. To what extent does lack of interest lead to the demise of an association, or is it the result of cumulative discouraging events?
2. While unity and cultural identity among members appears to be extremely important in the case of the Acre rubber tappers, are the diverse cultural identities of the Mato Grosso frontiers an important asset for their movement?

Rubber tappers in Acre presented a unique model of sustainable development. But individual cultural groups migrating to Mato Grosso have not presented their own development models. Rather, as a sort of consortium of social organisations, their uniqueness lies in the mobilisation of diversity.

5. Themes for future research

5.1 Identification of ethnic diversity

Ethnic diversity in the promotion of collective actions is a vital area for further research. In our survey, migrants more integrated with markets (mostly from southern and southeastern states) tended to be more vocal at meetings and assemblies, demanding either economic or political interventions. This difference may result in biased decision making towards demands by more vocal groups. Also, systems of production in which profit or market orientation are not at the core of decision making may become marginalised and not taken into consideration when designing projects or demanding credit. As one of our researchers wrote in her field journal:

Two maranhenses [people from Maranhão, a state with a large black and indigenous population] participated at this meeting. As they spoke, people seem not to take them seriously, as if they were not understood. Their participation was perceived mostly as some sort of folkloric, comic contribution to cheer the discussion groups. One aspect that called my attention was that often, although in a

joking fashion, the representatives [from the south] referred to the maranhenses and the 'cuiabanos' [slang for Mato Grosso natives] as those who enjoy a lazy life, little work.

Without confrontational situations, members seem equal. But associations should question how homogenisation and use of reductionist terms such as 'community,' 'settler,' or 'migrant' affect real practices and concepts. In the frontier, communities are still in formation.

5.2 Promotion of diversity among leaders

Most of the leaders and key informants that we interviewed were from Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo or Minas Gerais. Although many interviewees consider there to be a great mix of people from the south, north and northeast in the settlements, those who presented themselves as representatives of the associations and the most vocal leaders were all from the southern or southeastern states. Whether the association format is not attractive to certain cultural groups or whether there is a power imbalance within associations are questions demanding further investigation.

5.3 Potential agreements and alliances with diverse sectors

Many associations are strongly connected to INCRA and political parties. In one case, the INCRA regional manager was a former settler linked to the rural unions who was introduced to his position at INCRA through his ties with the PT. Such political connections can generate opposition within INCRA and make projects more difficult for associations. Links with loggers are also difficult. One interviewee made the following contrast:

We do not have here the criminal logger that you have there in Pará: those who own lands and devastate everything up to river banks. Here we have the logger who uses 'cold docs' [false authorisation documents]. During the 30 days of the Curupira operation [operation by the federal police against illegal logging] loggers were stopped, but now they are resuming their business... As loggers are not owners of forests, they buy logs from either large or small land owners and, as land owners do not have management plans, 90 per cent of timber is illegal.

Therefore, in current contexts, alliances with loggers can present great risks that involve associations in illegal matters. However, ignoring loggers is also not a desirable option, as members will still be exposed to unscrupulous loggers. Further studies to improve government and private sector agreements are necessary.

5.4 Accessing credit collectively and using it efficiently

As observed by our researchers in Pará and Acre, access to credit and other financial support is the major goal for most associations. The same is observed in Mato Grosso. It is clear that access to credit alone is not enough to overcome marginalisation. The dismantling of many associations following inefficient use of credit is proof that other drivers are necessary to assure full political participation. Our understanding is that political participation may be achieved through several steps over the lifetime of a social group or individual. Many associations are dismantled, and then substituted with other forms of organisation. Unsatisfied members may leave the association after years of struggle. However, the experiences of interviewees who were members of failed associations in their state of origin but are now contributing to frontier organisations leads us to think more in terms of life trajectories. Longitudinal studies are necessary to understand the cumulative effects leading to greater (or lesser) participation in policy processes. The presence of association members in the frontier who have backgrounds in social mobilisation elsewhere is a relevant and catalytic asset.

5.5 Connections between daily life in the settlements and mobilising social movements along the BR-163

Associations have faced difficulties connecting to the daily lives of members through broader social mobilisation events. Representation of groups at large events and attempts to initiate dialogue with authorities does not necessarily mean that members are playing a greater role in policy processes. Donors, local supporters, and leaders should plan for additional investments in time and resources to complete the process of mobilisation. The Association of Rural Workers in the Califórnia Settlement provides a good example of what an association could do in this situation. This association focuses on local, community-based activities and strengthening local organisations, but also has an established procedure of informing members of their directors' external affairs.

5.6 The role of party-politics in associations

The Brazilian crisis of party-politics may be a unique opportunity to review associations' relationships with parties and to build their own code of ethics. Parties should provide a social space for members to elaborate on their specific views, principles, concepts and practices on how to run a society. Parties should also provide the discipline to pursue them and negotiate them with others members of society. Associations represent members of diverse party affiliations. How to manage the goal of greater political participation and at the same time congregate members of diverse parties are challenges faced by associations. One interesting option that deserves further investigation is the case of those associations that are promoting decentralisation through the establishment of sub-groups. The decisions and ideas emerging from the sub-

groups express greater grassroots participation and bring party-politics closer to daily life.

5.7 The role of markets in associations

All of the case study associations are dealing with problems of market integration. Although associations are not supposed to deal directly with economic matters, and should not aim to make profit, they are tasked with promoting access to credit and establishing connections between members and markets. Only a few concrete examples of consolidated connections to markets were observed (including the Esteio Family Farm and GAPA). Whether associations should be platforms to breed and develop micro-enterprises, or whether they should make links with alternative markets through channels such as fair trade, certification etc. are questions demanding further investigation.

6. Conclusions

Associations are becoming institutional elements of frontier life in the Amazon. They may represent the most feasible first step towards de-marginalisation of the rural population.

To supplement the previous report from the states of Acre and Pará (Campos *et al.*, 2005) this report set out to test the same four hypotheses about associations. Conclusions related to those hypotheses are listed below:

***Cohesion* – does association functionality depend on particularly strong mutual aspirations?**

- In frontier areas, people do not share a common history and background. This initial context, however, does not prevent the formation of associations. In part, this is because associations are mandatory instruments for migrants to apply for government benefits (their primary goal). Nonetheless, this diversity presents challenges for the continuous functioning of associations. Gradual recognition of the differences and clear identification of mutual aspirations are critical for association cohesion.
- Most associations form ostensibly to promote long-term social and environmental goods such as community self-help – but they often have other important short-term economic and party-political interests as well. Associations undergo stages of greater and lesser cohesion, as they accumulate experience. Short-term interests and experiences are part of the fabric of the long-term social and environmental vision necessary for cohesion.
- There are significant instances of associations being used as political tools that tend to favour certain groups that they are associated with. In such cases, concerns over economic equity are often not adequately addressed. This

generates problems in the long-term, often resulting in associations ending, but others may be created.

- Associations can either evolve or fragment as they incorporate the experiences of newly arriving members or adopt new ideas. In these situations, cohesion may be reinforced either among members in the original association or among members creating new associations. The process of finding the best organisational configuration should consider the integrity of the community as a whole unit.
- While external support is vital, it is not sufficient for success if there is no internal cohesion and motivation for participation.

Resilience – does association functionality depend on the credibility and legitimacy of decision making?

- Almost all associations stipulate adequate attendance at meetings as a membership requirement, but this is often neglected by members and leaders. An association may keep functioning, even without legitimate mandates, if the leaders manage to gain support from external agencies and, at least, from certain segments within the association. This partial functionality may be seen as a form of resilience.
- Dynamic leadership was correlated with association health. The longer term resilience that requires the development of robust institutional procedures has not been consolidated in the Mato Grosso associations. Nonetheless, the gradual construction of these institutions may be observed in cumulative processes carried out by different leaders and, in the evolving roles and responsibilities of members in their varied degrees of participation.
- In many cases, associations fail or suffer a decline in performance due to the incremental loss of motivation – often associated with misconduct of leaders and failure to pay membership fees and attend meetings. In the cases in Mato Grosso, the incremental loss of motivation may be the effect and not the cause of failing to achieve established goals. Globalisation and national policies impact strongly on associations. Members may invest either in alternative 'invisible' familial forms of organisation or in more regional and highly visible forms of representation and organisation, such as the Mobilisation of the Social Movements along the BR-163. Both options do not exclude local associations, but reinforce their resilience and re-shaping.

Equity – does association functionality depend on the adequate representation of interests (including gender)?

- Most problems faced by associations have immediate links to loss of trust in leadership, lack of proper management or failure to collect and administer financial resources effectively. In Mato Grosso, most of these alleged primary reasons are related to inadequate implementation of public policies and programmes and insufficient planning. These create opportunities for

misconduct within associations and government agencies. Effective inclusion of groups that are usually marginalised would decrease these opportunities for misconduct.

- Membership tends to be biased towards men because the main issues handled by associations are culturally linked to male domains (land tenure, credit, infrastructure, relationships with government authorities etc.). This trend has been changed by larger regional and more politicised mobilisations. In Mato Grosso, several women's associations created more recently have not yet found fertile ground to promote their specific interests. Education and health are considered as women's issues that might be handled by associations. Demanding good public education and participating in the implementation of schools and educational programmes are activities in which women participate spontaneously, and which would benefit from associations' support. Other issues of interest to women, such as reproductive rights, health and domestic violence, seem to demand other forums of discussion and action, at least in initial phases of the group development.

- Indigenous groups such as the Mundurucu, Apiacá, Kaiabi, Kreen Akarore, Terena, and Xavante were present in our research sites. However, in daily life there is little or no contact between these groups and the associations in our study. Many indigenous groups have been displaced from their ancestral lands to clear space for colonists. Although some groups resisted, as for example the Kaiabi, who managed to prevent their dislocation to the Xingu National Park, this history of conflict affects potential relationships. In the associations we visited, detribalised individuals demand greater attention to ethnic inclusion among members. Interactions are likely to change over time, as contexts continue to be transformed. For example, the Xavante are now getting involved in soybean production – which would have been unheard of only a short time ago.

Support – does association functionality depend on the degree to which policies and institutions are supportive?

- External support, including financial, administrative, technical and logistical is both widespread and essential to keep associations running. As in Acre and Pará, none of the associations in our survey have been self-sufficient. Such dependency is not only a function of the need for supportive policies and institutions, it is also a result of the nature and intentions of this support.

- Support often comes from the more consolidated organisations of the social movements. For example, GTA (funded by the PPG7), provided financial support for meetings, training, and seminars to one of its members – the Lucas do Rio Verde Rural Workers' Union. There are also cases in which the GTA mediated associations' access to projects funded by the Ministry of Environment through PADEQ.

- Support also comes from government institutions. PRONAF's various programmes such as 'Habitation', 'Light for the Countryside' and 'Light for All' have provided access to credit and infrastructure. INCRA made these PRONAF

programmes accessible to settlement projects. Another source of government support was Promanejo, a programme linked to IBAMA and the Ministry of Environment, funded by PPG7. The state government has offered help to associations through PADIC, a programme of direct support to community initiatives.

- One other occasional source of support is the private sector. For example, the Loggers' Association supported GAPA in a partnership for the production of organic compost.
- Finally, support from the IDB exemplifies the complexity of big projects funded by an international finance agency, through the mediation of politicians. Our observations suggest that some projects are not adequately designed for associations. They demand capacities and bureaucratic skills that the grantee does not have. Nor do they provide means to acquire them. Some funds are so complicated to manage that they erode the cohesion of the group leading to a survival of the fittest. Some tactics have been used to improve support from large donors. For example, networks of associations have tried to arrange direct dialogue with donors – sometimes pushing for part funding of institutional capacity building.
- A striking feature of our fieldwork results is the high degree of influence that party-politics has on all of the examined associations – some of which are second or third branch groups, that have arisen from political disagreements in original associations. The current crisis in the history of party-politics in Brazil makes it difficult to assess whether support from political parties is beneficial to associations and promotes participation in political processes.

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Annex 1. Brief descriptions of case study associations

April 17 Association of Small Rural Producers in the Caetés Settlement, Diamantino Municipality

Background	The first form of organisation within the Caetés Settlement originated as a result of the land reform process in the region, when a group of migrants – mostly from the southern part of Brazil – gathered to fight for their land rights. Despite having already been organised since 1996, the April 17 Association of Small Rural Producers was only legally constituted in the following year, four months after the land titling process undertaken by the National Institute of Land Reform.
Participants	Small farmers living in Caetés Settlement.
Objectives	Access to rural credit and technical assistance, as well as financial support to implement social and infrastructure projects, notably housing, health post, school and road improvement.

Association of Rural Worker Women in the Caetés Settlement, Diamantino Municipality

Background	Created in 2000, due to internal conflict between the April 17 Association leader and another association founded in 1998 by an outsider. In light of the weaknesses of both associations, which mostly comprised male members, the settlement's women decided to join together and form the Association of Rural Worker Women. The women of Caetés were spurred on by the successful experience of a women's association in a nearby settlement, which assisted them in the search for financial resources.
Participants	Women of Caetés Settlement.
Objectives	Obtain support from government agencies and NGOs, in order to access technical assistance; credit for tools, machines and infrastructure; and financial resources for social, environmental and infrastructure projects, such as road improvement, electrical power, telephone, community centre, school and health post improvement, water supply and introduction of agroforestry.
Products	By the end of 2002, the association managed to obtain both national and international funds channelled by the central government. Due to political reasons, however, those funds were assigned to the community through the April 17 Association. In order to administer those financial resources, an administrative council was formed in 2003 by representatives of the April 17 Association and the women's association. Four thematic commissions – namely production; social support; environment and administration (represented by two members from each sector of the settlement) were later agreed to plan the implementation of communal projects. Implemented projects up to July 2005 are the improvement of the health post; medical

	equipment; water supply for most families; electrical power; training and technical assistance.
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Association of Rural Workers in the Boa Esperança/Entre Rios Settlement, Nova Ubiratã Municipality

Background	The association was formally created at the end of the 1990s. Later, in 2002, a colonist farmer from southeastern Brazil formed a representative board with members of outside communities and was elected president. As projects of benefit to the community were not successfully implemented, people became less motivated to participate. Due to economic difficulties, most people left the settlement. It is estimated that in 2003 only 97 out of 408 families remained. The association was largely inactive until 2004, with no communal meetings or any form of organisation taking place. By the end of this term, people had started to join together and organise themselves into different sectors within the settlement to discuss how to tackle common difficulties. In 2005, a new representative board was elected at a general meeting attended by almost 250 people. New articles of association were formulated and the association now has about 300 members.
Participants	Colonist farmers living in the Boa Esperança/Entre Rios Settlement.
Objectives	Obtain financial resources for infrastructure projects and basic services such as water supply, health care, road building, community centre, transport and telephone. Other objectives relate to access to credit, technical assistance for farming activities and funds for environmental projects.
Products	Health care and technical assistance; elaboration of environmental projects for recuperation of degraded areas, fire control, introduction of agroforestry systems and apiculture in order to apply for international funds channelled by the Ministry of Environment.

Association of Rural Workers in the Califórnia Settlement, Vera Municipality

Background	This association was established in 1999 to facilitate access to financial resources. Together with a group of colonist farmers, the association was mostly formed by people who had previously worked for logging companies in the region and had secured a patch of land in the settlement. Many people had been brought to the area by the logging companies they worked for. Searching for short-term benefits, many came to extract wood, selling the land assigned to them by INCRA, after accessing funds from central government. According to interviewees, only 40 per cent of colonists remained in the settlement. In 2004, the president left for Pará and people started to organise themselves, encouraged by a group of small farmers from southern Brazil, who had bought the land sold by the former colonists. They gathered and
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	formed a new representative board that took over in the same year. New articles of association were formulated and, currently, the association has 160 members.
Participants	Formerly: Mostly colonists who had previously worked for logging companies. Currently: Families of small farmers (men, women, young people older than 16 living in the settlement).
Objectives	Access to funds for infrastructure projects such as housing, electrical power, health post, school, community centre, transport, telephone; community radio, rural credit and technical assistance. Implementation of environmental projects on alternative energy sources, organic fertiliser, recuperation of degraded areas, agroforestry systems and apiculture.
Products	Funds for housing, electrical power, community centre, basic schooling and access to rural credit and technical support.

Association of Nova Esperança Family Farmers in the Mercedes I and II Settlement, Tabaporã Municipality

Background	The association was formed by a group of family farmers in 2003. It aimed to claim land titles for members through INCRA. The association started with membership of 19 families, which has now risen to 68. Note: There were already three other associations within the settlement, but they covered geographical areas that are too distant to allow articulation of groups living in different parts of the settlement. Later, even more associations were formed. Currently, there are five associations that were formed by settlement smallholders. Despite being situated in distant areas, these farmers' associations hope to organise at the municipal council, to work together in the future. Other associations have been formed with diverse purposes. Some no longer operate; others are represented by colonists developing large-scale agriculture in the settlement.
Participants	Family farmers in the Mercedes I and II Settlement.
Objectives	Land titles, funds for infrastructure projects, credit for farming activities, environmental projects for development of agroforestry systems and apiculture.
Products	In 2003, the association elected two representatives to the municipal council. Formed by the municipal government and members of other local associations of Tabaporã, municipal funds are allocated to the region by the municipal council. Aside from this involvement, the association has not been able to do much – INCRA has not yet officially acknowledged land rights. Without land titles, association members are not entitled to access government funds or credit. However, a major show of strength along the BR-163 highway at the time of our visit seems to have subsequently triggered recognition and titling by INCRA.

Association of Agro-Rio Family Farmers in the Mercedes I and II Settlement, Tabaporã Municipality

Background	The Association of Agro-Rio Family Farmers was the Mercedes Settlement's first association and was created with the intention of organising the entire settlement. However, due to the large extension of this settlement and the high number of families (600) and plots (1012), additional associations were created. Currently, this association is practically non-active as its board of directors is busy working at the COOPERME cooperative.
Participants	Colonist farmers living in the Mercedes I and II Settlement.
Objectives	Land regulation, demands for infrastructure, technical assistance and credit for members.
Products	Some steps towards land regulation and an initial phase of electrification have been achieved.

Association of Agrovila Residents in the Mercedes I and II Settlement, Tabaporã Municipality

Background	The Association of Agrovila Residents was created in 2003, due to internal conflicts among leaders running the Mercedes Settlement. The residents of the Agrovila do not necessarily have land in the Mercedes Settlement, and many of them offer services and commerce for residents who do. The association has 701 members.
Participants	Producers and beneficiaries of the agrarian reform, small and medium traders who own a small plot in the Agrovila.
Objectives	Financial support to improve the Agrovila's infrastructure.
Products	Training for settlers in trade, schooling, and some agrarian legal matters.

Electricity, Telephone and Rural Development Cooperative in the Mercedes I and II Settlement, Tabaporã Municipality

Background	The cooperative was created in 2003, with 20 members. The main goal was to access government support for infrastructure, credit and technical assistance for the settlement. The first project was to introduce electricity for the settlers through the installation of a small hydroelectric scheme. The problem is that not all families are able to pay for electricity. Recently, the cooperative won an INCRA competition, and was selected as the organisation responsible for coordinating the construction of settlers' houses.
Participants	Colonist farmers engaged in infrastructural improvements.
Objectives	Access to electricity, technical assistance and credit for all settlers.
Products	Electricity and housing at low costs for settlers

Association of Amazon Forest Handcrafters, Cláudia Municipality

Background	Created in 2002, this association of artisans currently has a membership of 25. Most of the members' products are made from timber waste, provided by logging companies. The association was formed as the result of a partnership with the municipal government, which provided the infrastructure for artisans to expose their work.
Participants	Craftsmen and craftswomen of Cláudia Municipality.
Objectives	Trading of products to alternative markets.
Products	Shop (Casa dos Artesãos) in Cláudia Municipality; training courses for association members with the technical support of SEBRAE; trading at the local market and to Europe.

Agroforestry and Environmental Protection Group – GAPA, Cláudia Municipality

Background	Alarmed by the environmental degradation of Cláudia Municipality, local teachers, environmentalists and handcrafters founded an association to address the problem. The group meets once a fortnight to plan and evaluate their activities aimed at environmental education for the municipal and regional public. GAPA runs campaigns and helps mobilise schools for the restoration of rivers, maintenance of forest parks, and other conservation initiatives. GAPA also runs a factory producing organic compost for soil fertilisation with the Loggers' Association.
Participants	12 professional men and women.
Objectives	Promote environmental education at a municipal and regional level.
Products	Environmental education and services. Organic compost.

Cooperative of Ecological Producers in the Amazon Gate Region (COOPERAGREPA), Terra Nova do Norte Municipality

Background	The cooperative was created in 2002 following an exchange of experiences between producers from Mato Grosso and Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil. In Santa Catarina efforts were being made to follow traditional agricultural practices (without the use of chemicals) and develop organic certified products. This led to the idea of a similar project in Mato Grosso. Although there were already individual experiences of such practices in Mato Grosso, they represented only isolated initiatives. Farmers created the cooperative (which now has a membership of more than 400 families) to organise themselves on a larger scale.
Participants	Small family farmers from 10 municipalities in the northern region of Mato Grosso.
Objectives	Training and implementation of alternative agricultural practices without the use of chemicals. Trading of organic and certified products.
Products	Technical training and development of organic and certified

	products, such as Brazil nuts, coffee, sugar cane and guaraná, labelled by the European Ecocert, and traded to internal and international markets, including Europe and Japan.
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Esteio Family Farm (a family-based micro-enterprise), Alta Floresta Municipality

Background	25 years ago the Esteio family decided to transform their smallholding into a rural micro-enterprise. Their main product is fish, but they also derive income from other organic products. The farm is run by family members and employees who all have labour rights. The owners of the Esteio Family Farm have agreements with municipal governments, unions and associations to act as voluntary trainers for association/union members and municipal agents etc. They also donate young fish stock to other associations.
Participants	One family and three to seven employees.
Objectives	Improve quality of life for the family and employees, and offer training for those interested in organic production
Products	Training for 76 people (in particular for members of associations from 19 municipalities); fish, milk, seedlings, etc.

Annex 2. A step-by-step tool to improve participation of association members in political processes

Tool: Life histories to build associations

Why: As a result of our research, we learned that the richness of members' life trajectories has not really been considered in the association's work, and this jeopardises its very legitimacy. The lack of interest identified among members was in part due to the distance between their individual lives and the consolidation of association as a collective subject. We thought that associations would benefit from:

1. Public sharing of life histories of individuals, forests, land, associations and struggles;
2. Correlating life histories to ongoing collective challenges;
3. Identifying opportunities for collective actions as an association.

This tool is designed to elicit the diversity of association members, overcome differences and realise potential for common platforms and goals.

For what purpose: The objective of this tool is to allow each member to express his/her background and views from his/her own standing point. Sharing life histories provides a process in which marginalised or less vocal members of the group are able to bring their views and assets to the table on their own terms. The tool also helps to set less confrontational settings for dialogue. The aim is to show the correlations between family and community/association processes, and identify trends in other correlated matters, such as deforestation, market access, income, etc.

How: The activities involved in this process are:

- Interview key informants related to the association (especially the oldest immigrants); ask for his/her life history, observations about the forests and land, and living conditions in general. Take notes or tape the interview, and as the interviewee tells events in his/her life, ask when and how they happened.
- Read or listen to the interview and note the years or periods of time in which major events happened in the life of the interviewee. Also make a note of the sentences expressing these events.
- Prepare a matrix with the years or periods of time in which major events happened in the first row. In the second cell of the first column, write down 'life history.' In the subsequent cells, write down two or three aspects which are relevant for the association as a whole. Fill in the cells with sentences transcribed from the interview. An example of this from an interview at the Mercedes Settlement is shown in the table below.

	1997-1998	1999-2000	2000-2001	2004-2005
My life history	I was one of the first migrants who entered this land. We were called 'pardais,' because we were many and people thought we would live there just for a while.	Many of my fellows gave up and sold their lands. But before leaving, they sold lots of timber to loggers and in the end, the land.	A new wave of migrants came in. But these ones came with at least some money to invest in their plots.	More people kept coming in, and those who came with more money, began to buy than one plot of land.
The history of our forests	The forest was very rich at that time. But people let loggers come in and cut the forest. The prices for timber were very low...	Up to this year, there were no credits for work in agriculture, so everybody was selling timber. Plots became poor of forests.	Those older settlers who remained began to worry about the use of the forests, or of what was left of the forests.	Forests are now scarce, and with the credit, people are buying more cattle and planting more pastures, forests are getting distant and poor.
The history of our land	Many gave up and sold their land right in the second year. Those who remained in the land, sold logs to the timber companies and, with the money, they bought cattle.	We made the first project for PRONAF-A (credit) and we used the money to buy cattle and fence pastures.	At that time, there were still some vacant plots, open for the newcomers	Richer immigrants are arriving, trying to buy more than one plot. Sometimes they use other people's names to buy the land, the so-called 'oranges'.
The history of our association	Each person took care of oneself. We were individualistic.	At this year, the first association was founded.	New settlers with greater experiences in cooperativism and associativism arrived. They had come from states with better governments.	In spite of members with greater experiences, the association got weakened. Now we are trying to re-organise.
The history of our struggles				

- Present the matrix at an association meeting and ask members to share their life histories and views. If the audience is illiterate, this can be done orally. Otherwise, you can ask participants to think what happened in their

lives/forests/land/association in those years and write down short sentences like those in the matrix, on 6x8" cards. These cards can be attached to the matrix as each participant presents his/her history and views.

- In the last row, the history of our struggles, a Venn diagram can be used, representing all of the actors who emerged from the life histories. Examples of ordering aspects in the diagram could be: (greater/lesser) participation in political matters, access to forest resources, community well-being, etc.
- In the diagram, the association can be represented by an arrow, whose direction/orientation can show how the association helped or constrained each actor's trajectory towards (greater/lesser) participation in political matters, access to forest resources, community well-being, etc.

Tips:

- Ideally you should have no more than 15 participants, with as much diversity as possible. The idea is to invite those less vocal members of the group to speak. The use of cards helps to organise the process. Make sure that illiterate people have helpers to write down their histories for them. For this exercise, ideally you will need one facilitator and one assistant.
- If the timespan on the matrix is too long or the group diversity is too great, the years or periods of time provided by the key informant may not serve all participants. In this case, form a matrix from several pieces of paper or 6x8" cards and have extra cards ready to add a year or period as necessary. It is easier to move and rearrange the matrix with cells separated on to different pieces of card.
- It is visually better if you use a different coloured card for each row. Be sure to remind participants which colour is related to which row, i.e. pink for life history, green for history of forests, beige for history of land, etc.
- Try to keep the exercise shorter than two hours, as participants may get tired. Be careful to leave enough time for final discussions, after the matrix is set.
- Depending on the level of heterogeneity and/or conflict among participant, it is sometimes better to complete this exercise in stages. First, instead of just a single key informant, interview informants from antagonistic groups too. Second, hold two or three focus groups and form different matrixes. Third, present the diverse matrixes, and facilitate the discussion at an association meeting.
- Instead of using the Venn diagram to discuss the situation of each participant across time and potential actions to be promoted by the association, another useful tool is the 'Future Scenario' (Wollenberg *et al.*, 2000).

Annex 3. Supporting questionnaire used in informal open interviews

ENTREVISTA : _____ - _____
(USE NUMERAÇÃO SEQUENCIAL VINCULADA A UM CODIGO PARA CADA ASSOCIAÇÃO)

NOME DA ASSOCIAÇÃO:

ENDEREÇO: _____

NUMERO DE TELEFONE : (_____) _____

PROJETO:

FORTEALECIDOS POR ASSOCIAÇÃO

QUESTIONÁRIO 1 – LÍDER DA ASSOCIAÇÃO

Nossa pesquisa visa entender quais fatores determinam a real utilidade de diferentes tipos de associação em áreas que têm relação com a floresta - O objetivo é aprender o que realmente funciona em termos de associativismo para poder ajudar os membros e lideranças das associações.

Para conseguir isso, nós estamos entrevistando líderes e membros de associações nesta região.

Esta pesquisa está sendo desenvolvida pelo Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia (IPAM) e é parte de um amplo projeto internacional coordenado pelo Instituto Internacional para o Ambiente e Desenvolvimento (IIED) desenvolvido em parceria com instituições no Brasil, China, Guiana, Índia, África do Sul e Uganda.

Todas as informações coletadas por esse processo de entrevistas serão estritamente CONFIDENCIAIS! Não divulgaremos o que os entrevistados individuais disseram nessas entrevistas. As informações vão servir de base para confecção de material impresso.

Não existem respostas certas ou erradas para essas questões – o que realmente importa é que você dê sua opinião honesta sobre cada questão. Seu conhecimento é essencial para se entender como nós podemos fazer as associações funcionarem melhor.

Cada entrevista deverá levar aproximadamente uma hora.

A. INFORMAÇÕES GERAIS

Data: _____ Entrevistador (a) : _____
Município: _____ Local da Entrevista: _____

B. PERFIL DO ENTREVISTADO

Antes de falarmos sobre a associação propriamente dita, será útil conhecer um pouco da sua experiência e seu papel nessa associação.

Nome completo: _____
Sexo: Masculino () Feminino ()
Data de nascimento: |____/____/____|
Qual o seu papel nessa associação?:

Há quanto tempo você participa desta associação? Quantos anos neste papel? _____

Você sempre residiu nesta localidade? () sim () não
Se não, onde você vivia antes?

Você já esteve envolvido em outras associações antes dessa? () sim () não
Se sim, quais?

Se sim, quais os papéis que você desempenhava e por quanto tempo?

C1. História da associação e objetivos

O objetivo desta seção é entender como essa associação em particular veio a existir (e assim entender melhor como as associações em geral se formam).

O que levou a associação a ser criada e quem sugeriu isso? _____

Quando a associação foi formalmente fundada? |__|__| / |__|__| / |__|__|__|__|
(se você não sabe a data exata, tente lembrar mais ou menos em que ano foi)
A idéia para essa associação foi:
() inovadora e uma novidade ou () copiando um exemplo de outra associação de outro lugar?

Quais foram as principais razões para você querer trabalhar junto numa associação ao invés de trabalhar individualmente? _____

O que foi feito para encorajar as pessoas a se associarem?

() reunião especial

() incentivos (e.g. dinheiro, presentes, etc), quais? _____

() um interesse comum compartilhado e boca-a-boca

() outro

O número de associados está crescendo? () sim () não **ou** () ficando igual
Se sim, o que está atraindo novos membros?

Se não, porque os membros estão deixando a associação?

Quais foram os objetivos originais declarados desta associação em qualquer um dos artigos do estatuto?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Como esses objetivos foram definidos e por quem?

Esses objetivos ainda representam as principais propostas da associação hoje?
() sim () não

Se não, como esses objetivos foram mudando ao longo do tempo?

Na sua opinião, em que medida esses objetivos se adequam às necessidades de seus membros?

(circule um dos números abaixo)

Escala	0	1	2	3	4	5
	em nada	muito pouco	pouco	razoavelmente	bem	perfeitamente

Há algo que você gostaria que a associação fizesse, que ela atualmente não faz?

C2. TORNAR-SE SÓCIO: SEUS CUSTOS E BENEFÍCIOS

O objetivo dessa seção é aprendermos porque os membros participam desta associação em particular (e entender melhor como os custos e benefícios podem ser melhor distribuídos em uma associação de forma geral).

Assumimos que associações funcionam bem quando os seus custos e benefícios são distribuídos de forma justa entre os seus membros. Queremos saber em que medida isso é realmente o caso.

A possibilidade de tornar-se sócio é aberta para indivíduos, ou para instituições ou para ambos?

Quantos membros pertencem a esta associação?

Total: _____ e se aplicável (Homens: _____ e Mulheres: _____)

Se os membros são indivíduos, em que faixa de idade eles estão? **(marque vários se necessário)**

- () menos que 21 anos
() 21 a 40 anos
() 41 a 60 anos
() mais que 60 anos

A possibilidade de tornar-se sócio é restrita de alguma maneira? (por ex. limitada a uma determinada região ou área, limitada pelo tipo de profissão, limitada só para homens ou só para mulheres, etc)

O que é exigido para tornar-se membro dessa associação?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

A associação cobra taxas de seus membros? () sim () não

Se sim,

() mensalmente em dinheiro, valor \$ _____

() mensalmente em produto – o que e quanto? _____

() anualmente em dinheiro, valor \$ _____

() anualmente em produto – o que e quanto? _____

() outros, descreva: _____

Existem quaisquer outras responsabilidades ou deveres para o sócio?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Existem tipos diferenciados de membros (por exemplo, sócio integral ou sócio parcial, sócios com direito de voto integral ou voto limitado de alguma forma, etc)? Existem concessões especiais para grupos que tenham necessidades específicas e se sim, como isso funciona?

Na sua opinião, quais são os benefícios de ser sócio dessa associação?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Em que medida você acha que os custos e os benefícios de ser um sócio são compartilhados de forma justa?

(circule um dos números abaixo)

Escala	0	1	2	3	4	5
	em nada	muito pouco	pouco	razoavelmente	bem	perfeitamente

Em sua opinião, o que poderia ser feito para melhorar a participação nessa associação?

C3. Governança da associação e tomada de decisões

Os objetivos dessa seção é entendermos como essa associação em particular é gerenciada e como as decisões mais importantes são tomadas (e aprendermos sobre os benefícios das diferentes estruturas de gerenciamento das associações em geral).

Assumimos que a sobrevivência de uma associação ao longo do tempo depende muito da qualidade dos processos de tomada de decisão. Queremos saber quais os modelos alternativos que existem e quais as vantagens e desvantagens de cada um desses modelos.

Quais são os principais cargos nesta associação?

Nome da posição	Responsabilidades

Como esses líderes são escolhidos?

- () voto dos sócios () decisão das lideranças do grupo
() indicação de fora () outro, como? _____

Existe um processo regular para re-seleção?

- () sim () não

Se sim, por quanto tempo cada uma das posições principais dura, antes do novo processo de seleção?

Existem exigências especiais para aqueles que querem ocupar as posições de liderança na associação?

- () sim () não

Se sim, quais exigências são feitas?

- () experiência prévia em liderança em uma associação
() tempo mínimo de participação na associação (quanto tempo?): _____
() nível mínimo de educação (que nível?): _____
() ser sócio de alguma outra organização, qual? _____
() outras, (quais?) _____

Com que frequência às lideranças dessa Associação se encontram para discutir assuntos importantes?

- () uma vez por semana () uma vez por mês
() uma vez por trimestre () uma vez por ano
() outro?: _____

Como as decisões da Associação são tomadas?

- () voto dos membros () pela decisão dos líderes sozinhos
() não existe um processo bem definido, claro () outros, quais?

É necessário ter um quorum mínimo para que certas decisões sejam tomadas?

- () sim, quais? _____ () não

Porque? _____

Com que frequência as lideranças da Associação se encontram com os membros regulares?

- () uma vez por semana () uma vez por mês
() uma vez por trimestre () uma vez por ano
() outro?: _____

Qual é o procedimento para um membro qualquer levantar um ponto para discussão junto às lideranças?

Em sua opinião, todos os membros são:

- () tratados igualmente, ou () alguns recebem tratamento especial?

Existe um grupo dominante dentro da associação? () sim () não

Se sim, como a existência desse grupo afeta os outros membros?

Existem mecanismos especiais que assegurem que os diferentes grupos (homens, mulheres, pequenos proprietários, etc.) tenham a chance de expressar suas opiniões livremente?

Em geral, na sua opinião, como a Associação é gerenciada?

(circule um dos números abaixo)

Escala	0	1	2	3	4	5
	em nada	muito pouco	pouco	razoavelmente	bem	perfeitamente

Em sua opinião, o que poderia ser feito para melhorar o gerenciamento dessa associação?

C4. APOIO EXTERNO (PARCERIAS, POLÍTICAS E INSTITUIÇÕES)

O objetivo desta seção é aprender quais apoios externos e quais os fatores limitantes externos têm mais afetado esta associação (e de forma geral, entender quais fatores constituem um ambiente favorável para que uma associação funcione melhor).

Assumimos que os apoios externos ou os limitantes externos podem ser fatores críticos em determinar o útil funcionamento de associações, e queremos identificar quais são esses elementos favoráveis e desfavoráveis para os diferentes tipos de associação.

Foi necessário apoio externo para se fundar essa associação?

() sim () não

Se sim, que tipo de apoio?

() de uma agência governamental, qual?: _____

() de uma ONG, qual?: _____

() de um banco, qual?: _____

() de um indivíduo em particular, quem?: _____

() de uma outra instituição ou indivíduo, quem?: _____

Se sim, qual foi o papel desta instituição ou indivíduo na criação dessa associação?

Se sim, quais instituições ou indivíduos de fora estão ainda envolvidos com a Associação, e o que eles fazem?

Se sim, em sua opinião, teria sido possível criar ou manter a Associação sem o apoio desses agentes externos?

() sim () não

Porque? _____

Essas instituições ou indivíduos de fora se encontram regularmente com a associação?

() sim () não

Se sim, com que objetivos? _____

Se sim, com que frequência? _____

Existem outros indivíduos ou instituições que você pensa que deveriam estar ligados à associação?

() sim () não

Se sim, qual instituição ou indivíduo? _____

Se sim, para que?:

() ajuda financeira () apoio político

() apoio técnico () outro? _____

Existem instituições e políticas governamentais que incentivam a formação de associações tais como a sua? () sim () não

Se sim,
qual? _____

De que forma as políticas poderiam ser mudadas visando a melhorar o funcionamento dessa associação? _____

Quais são os principais obstáculos para o bom funcionamento da associação?

() falta de recursos financeiros

() pouco acesso à informação técnica

() problemas internos da associação

() falta de compromisso por parte dos sócios

() falta de apoio externo por parte do governo e outras agências

() outros, quais? _____

De que maneira as instituições externas tem apoiada à formação e o andamento desta associação?

(circule um dos números abaixo)

Escala	0	1	2	3	4	5
	em nada	muito pouco	pouco	razoavelmente	bem	perfeitamente

D. Recapitulação

O objetivo desta seção é revisar o que foi dito e capturar qualquer outra opinião e conclusão que podem não ter sido bem compreendidas nas perguntas anteriores.

O que lhe agrada mais da maneira como a Associação trabalha ou o que ela tem conseguido?

O que mais lhe desagradou na Associação e em seu trabalho?

Se você tivesse que dar uma avaliação para a importância ou a utilidade em geral desta Associação, que avaliação você daria?

Escala	0	1	2	3	4	5
	sem importância	pouco importante	razoavelmente importante	importante	altamente importante	indispensável

Porque voce acha isso? _____

Baseado na sua experiência, existe um fator que é fundamental para o sucesso de uma Associação como esta? () sim () não

Se sim, que fator é esse? _____

Baseado em sua experiência, existe uma barreira que compromete o sucesso desta Associação? () sim () não

Se sim, qual é essa barreira? _____

MUITO OBRIGADO POR SEU TEMPO E APOIO!

Quaisquer comentários adicionais: _____